



# The Heritage We Defend

A Contribution to the History  
of the Fourth International

David North

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# Preface

The origins of this book lie in the struggle waged by the International Committee of the Fourth International against the repudiation of Trotskyism by the British Workers Revolutionary Party. After the split which took place inside the WRP in October 1985, a hysterical campaign aimed at discrediting the International Committee was initiated by two of its longtime leaders, Cliff Slaughter and Michael Banda. Seeking to justify their repudiation of the political authority of the International Committee, Banda and Slaughter set out to prove that there existed no basis for the ICFI's claim that it represented the historical continuity of Leon Trotsky's struggle to build the world party of socialist revolution.

The climax of this campaign came on February 8, 1986, when all supporters of the International Committee inside the Workers Revolutionary Party were barred, with the help of London police who had been summoned by the Banda-Slaughter faction, from entering the party's scheduled Eighth Congress.

This extraordinary action was directly inspired by the document which is the subject of this book, Banda's "27 Reasons Why the International Committee Should Be Buried Forthwith and the Fourth International Built." It was first published as a special four-page supplement in the February 7, 1986 issue of *Workers Press*, the Workers Revolutionary Party's weekly newspaper.

Nearly two years after the publication of this wretched article, it seems unbelievable that Banda's diatribe was



almost universally hailed by so-called Trotskyists all over the world as a long-awaited and monumental contribution to a reexamination of the history of the Fourth International. Whatever slight reservations they had about certain formulations employed by Banda, they had no doubt that he had, as Slaughter himself proclaimed, demolished the historical credibility of the International Committee.

Only the International Committee was prepared to declare, on the basis of a single reading of Banda's document, that it was the work of a man who had broken all connections with Marxism and was in the process of transforming himself into an open political agent of world imperialism and its Stalinist lackeys. This assessment was soon vindicated. Within a matter of months, Banda had deserted the Workers Revolutionary Party, denounced Trotskyism, and proclaimed himself an admirer of Joseph Stalin and a supporter of the Soviet bureaucracy.

When I first undertook the assignment of replying to Banda's attack, I had not anticipated that this would lead to a work anywhere near the size of the present volume. However, it soon became clear that the very process of refuting Banda's compilation of lies and distortions required, to some extent, a positive exposition of the history of the Fourth International since the assassination of Trotsky in 1940. This provided an opportunity to reexamine the historical significance of the International Committee's long and arduous struggle against the various petty-bourgeois revisions of Trotskyism which are associated with the name of Michel Pablo. From the standpoint of the development of the revolutionary workers' movement, the importance of such a reexamination of the International Committee's history more than justified such a comprehensive treatment of Banda's document.

Furthermore, inasmuch as Banda directed much of his venom against James P. Cannon, the founder of the Socialist Workers Party, the author also welcomed the opportunity to once again acknowledge the enormous role that this pioneer of Trotskyism played in the development of the Fourth International. While the author belongs to a political tendency in the United States, the Workers League, that

emerged out of a struggle against Cannon's subsequent degeneration in the late 1950s and early 1960s — i.e., against his and the SWP's capitulation to Pabloism — there is no doubt that James P. Cannon's invaluable contributions to Trotskyism constitute an integral part of the heritage defended by the International Committee.

This reply to Banda was originally published in a series of 35 installments which appeared in the *Bulletin*, the political organ of the Workers League, between April 1986 and February 1987. By the time the series was nearing completion, the predictions which the author had made in the first article about the future evolution of Banda were completely realized. That is, the series ended with an analysis of a second document by Banda, in which he announced his total repudiation of Trotskyism and his conversion to Stalinism.

In preparing the reply to Banda for publication in book form, the author decided that it would be best to leave the original articles, except for necessary editing, as they were written for the *Bulletin*. *The Heritage We Defend* was written as a polemic, and to rework it from beginning to end in the light of Banda's subsequent development would have entailed either massive editorial changes or even the writing of a different book. Given that Banda's evolution was correctly anticipated, such an effort was not really required.

At any rate, even as the author prepared this preface, a new document came into his possession which proves that Banda's political development has assumed a distinctly pathological character. The man who spent nearly 40 years of his life inside the Fourth International as an opponent of the Soviet bureaucracy now writes with admiration of "Stalin's implacable will and unflinching leadership" and declares that Trotskyism has been "converted by the dialectic of history into an ideological weapon of world imperialism against the USSR."

Banda's latest diatribe against Trotskyism is accompanied by an explicit repudiation of the revolutionary role of the proletariat and a rejection of the revolutionary struggle against the national bourgeoisie in the semicolonial and backward countries. Moreover, in keeping with his defense of the national bourgeoisie, Banda declares his support for

the Indo-Sri Lankan Accord, under whose auspices the Indian Army is carrying out the brutal murder of thousands of Tamils. If nothing else, Banda's evolution establishes the organic link between anti-Trotskyism and the deepest needs of world imperialism.

In the preparation and writing of this book, the author benefited immeasurably from the innumerable discussions he held with one of the most brilliant and irreconcilable Trotskyists of the post-World War II period — Keerthi Balasuriya, a leader of the International Committee of the Fourth International and the general secretary of the Revolutionary Communist League in Sri Lanka. As far back as 1971, when Banda was still claiming to defend the theory of permanent revolution, Comrade Balasuriya had detected Banda's political instability and subjected his departure from Trotskyist principles to a criticism that was as sharp as it was prophetic.

A fearless opponent of opportunism, Comrade Balasuriya played a decisive role in the struggle to defend the International Committee against the attacks of the Workers Revolutionary Party. He brought to this struggle a vast and penetrating knowledge of the history of the Fourth International and a keen understanding of the implications of the decades-long fight against Pabloite revisionism. Following the split with the WRP, Comrade Balasuriya authored a number of crucial documents exposing its leaders' betrayal of Marxism.

On the morning of Friday, December 18, 1987, while working at his writing table in the offices of the Revolutionary Communist League in Colombo, Comrade Keerthi suffered a sudden and massive coronary thrombosis to which he succumbed in a matter of minutes. He was just six weeks past his thirty-ninth birthday. It is with profound respect that I dedicate this volume to the memory of this great revolutionary theoretician and proletarian internationalist.

David North  
Detroit, Michigan  
January 5, 1988

# 1

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## M. Banda Renounces Trotskyism

As far as Marxism and the struggle for socialism is concerned, Michael Banda, the general secretary of the Workers Revolutionary Party, can no longer be counted among the living. With the publication of his "27 Reasons Why the International Committee Should Be Buried Forthwith and the Fourth International Built," Banda has declared his irrevocable political break with Trotskyism and has severed all connections with the revolutionary movement under whose banner he had fought his entire adult life. Despite the many years he devoted to the Trotskyist movement, Banda's fate is that he will be remembered for nothing so much as the manner in which he betrayed and deserted it — as the renegade who authored a libel against the Fourth International. After having spent 38 years inside the Trotskyist movement, Banda presents the following indictment of the Fourth International:

Contrary to Trotsky what we have seen is an uninterrupted series of crises, splits, betrayals, treachery, stagnation and confusion — a process characterized by a total lack of strategy and perspective, a manifest failure in theory and practice to grasp the nature of the epoch and concretize and enrich Trotskyism as contemporary Marxism.

What we have seen ... is an empirical and subjective idealist groping by self-styled groups of so-called Trotskyists for a means of short-circuiting the historical process, of looking for surrogates for the working class *a la* Pablo, of

searching after the elusive spectre of the "natural Marxist" *a la* Cannon or replacing the theory of dialectical materialism with the reactionary subjective-idealist methodology and epistemology of Healy.

With it went the substitution of a self-perpetuating bureaucratic clique for the democratic-centralist party and replacing Trotsky's conception of the FI by coteries of petty-bourgeois dilettantes, charlatans and fantasists masquerading as a "world party." It is certainly no accident — in fact it proceeds logically and practically from this very conception of the IC in 1953 — that not a single section of the IC — and this includes the Workers League of the United States — at any time in the last 32 years has been able to elaborate a viable perspective for the working class. Why?

To ask the question is to answer it. It must be stated emphatically, nay, categorically, that the FI was proclaimed but never built. Not even in Trotsky's time was there a cadre capable of sustaining his monumental work.

Banda's diatribe against the International Committee is built upon a glaring and obvious contradiction that he neither explains nor resolves. If all that issued from Trotsky's "monumental work" was a pathetic band of disreputable impostors, then a question mark must be placed over the real historical value of his work.

A composer who wrote symphonies that no orchestra can perform or a scientist whose theories are of interest only to quacks would not merit an important place in the history of human culture. If the political line for which Trotsky fought produced nothing but disasters and attracted only con-men, traitors, idiots and cowards, it must then be acknowledged that something was fundamentally wrong with the underlying conception that led to the founding of the Fourth International.

Thus, Banda's attack is not limited to the International Committee. He is challenging the political legitimacy of the Fourth International and the specific tendency known as Trotskyism. No less than 16 of the 27 "reasons" he gives for the need to destroy the International Committee are related to events which occurred before it was founded in 1953.

To give credence to Banda's arguments means acknowledging that it is necessary to reconsider the whole place our international movement has traditionally assigned to Trotsky in the history of Marxism. But the very fact that Banda's arguments must lead to the repudiation of Trotskyism undermines his attempt to discredit the ICFI. Precisely because Banda cannot attack the International Committee without renouncing the entire history of the Fourth International, he is inadvertently acknowledging that the ICFI does represent the continuity of Trotskyism.

While Banda, perhaps, believes that his fatuous theses constitute a novel contribution to Marxism, he is adding nothing to what has already been said by countless enemies of Trotskyism, most recently, by Jack Barnes, the dubious leader of the police-ridden Socialist Workers Party. Barnes has publicly declared that Trotskyism and its theory of permanent revolution "does not contribute today to arming either ourselves or other revolutionists.... It is an obstacle to reknitting our political continuity with Marx, Engels, Lenin, and the first four congresses of the Communist International. It has been an obstacle in our movement to an objective reading of the masters of Marxism, in particular, the writings of Lenin."<sup>1</sup>

Banda and his fellow renegades in the WRP view the International Committee as an obstacle to the "reknitting" of their "continuity" with ... what? That, they do not care to say, as yet. While Barnes came out openly and declared that the Fourth International must give way to a new "mass Leninist International" — that is, a class-collaborationist amalgam of petty-bourgeois nationalist, neo-Stalinist, agrarian populist and revisionist organizations — Banda has not yet identified the species of the political animal he is in the process of creating. Instead, he has devoted himself to enumerating 27 reasons why the International Committee, the sole Trotskyist tendency that is historically based on the struggle to defend the perspective of permanent revolution against Stalinism and Pabloite revisionism, should be destroyed. But despite the title of his article, he does not offer one reason why the Fourth International should be built.

Only those who either wish to delude themselves or are consciously preparing their own desertion from the Fourth International will claim that Banda's document represents a "legitimate" contribution to a discussion on the history of the Trotskyist movement. Marxists who defend revolutionary principles will find nothing "legitimate" in Banda's document. Those who wish to join the Pabloites and openly adapt themselves to Stalinism and Maoism are free to do so. But the International Committee of the Fourth International is not interested in discussing with skeptical and politically-diseased petty-bourgeois renegades who have seized on Banda's opus as a pretext to justify their break with Marxism. The ICFI is a revolutionary party which strives to organize the working class and the oppressed masses for the overthrow of the capitalist system, the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the building of a socialist society. Why should we welcome as "legitimate" the lies of a renegade who consciously falsifies the history of our movement and publicly calls for its destruction?

Some attempt to justify their own backsliding by claiming that the betrayals of the WRP under the leadership of Healy necessitate a questioning of "everything." This is the characteristic response of middle-class elements who lack firm roots in the workers' movement. But the quest for objective truth never proceeds through such a sterile repudiation of the heritage of past conquests. No serious person would suggest that the death of a patient as a result of a physician's negligence is a valid argument against medical science. Unfortunately, in the sphere of revolutionary politics, there is no shortage of skeptics who are eager to discover within each crisis of the Fourth International the failure of Trotskyism. But should we be impressed by the arguments of "revolutionaries" who completely lose their political bearings beneath the impact of a crisis within their organization? Such people cannot teach the working class anything, for the indiscriminate "questioning" proposed by the skeptics usually ends up with their personal desertion from the revolutionary movement.

In the aftermath of the split within the WRP, Banda and Slaughter, who along with Healy bear the major responsibil-

ity for their party's degeneration, have been engaged in a frenzied campaign to overthrow every principle and tradition of the International Committee of the Fourth International. They derive an almost perverse satisfaction from denigrating the Fourth International, and, like repentant sinners at a revival meeting, gleefully proclaim before one and all that they have wasted their lives. This orgy of self-indulgent and shameless debasement is called a "public discussion." The political irony of this disgusting spectacle is that it is being organized in the name of an on-going struggle against "Healyism."

What a monumental fraud! The personal degeneration of Healy is not the source of the wholesale repudiation of revolutionary principles that is now sweeping through the ranks of the Banda-Slaughter faction of the Workers Revolutionary Party. After all, Banda and Slaughter are not only grown men in their fifties; they are also, let us remember, experienced politicians who worked in the leadership of the ICFI for decades. They did not change their political views and historical conceptions simply because they "suddenly" discovered (if one is prepared to take their word for it) Healy's sexual misconduct.

Drastic changes in the political orientation of men such as Banda and Slaughter are the product of a complex interaction between the changing conditions of the class struggle and the unresolved contradictions in their own political development and that of the leadership of which they were a part. In the WRP, where a principled struggle among leaders and members had been replaced with clique relations in the leading committees, and where theoretical and political compromises were made in the name of preserving the unity and prestige of the leadership, the capacity to formulate a revolutionary response to the historic interests of the proletariat was steadily undermined. The party leadership gradually became the sounding board for class forces hostile to the workers.

The significance of Healy's personal abuse of authority in triggering the inner-party crisis is, from a historical perspective, of an entirely secondary character. While it became the pretext for the eruption inside the WRP, his personal



degeneration and descent into the most despicable forms of opportunism were part of the overall crisis of the leadership and its capitulation to the pressures of hostile class forces. Banda's "27 Reasons" and the increasingly hysterical attacks on the IC by the WRP renegades have developed organically out of the unrestrained growth of anti-Trotskyism and chauvinism within the WRP over the past decade.

The Banda-Slaughter faction represents only the most right-wing of the anti-Trotskyist elements which were politically nourished by Healy and used against the International Committee during the last 10 years. Except for an important section of workers and youth whose opposition to Healy's abuses stemmed from genuine Trotskyist convictions — the very forces against whom Healy, Slaughter and Banda conspired throughout the summer of 1985 and who, after the October split, were to consistently defend proletarian internationalism — there were no differences of a principled character between the Healy and Banda-Slaughter factions. Prior to the split on October 26, 1985, neither faction had produced a single analysis of the roots of the party crisis. Just one week after the split between Healy and the Banda-Slaughter faction, Banda wrote that no differences of either a programmatic or tactical character were involved in the struggle. The split, he declared, was merely over the character of relations between the sexes inside the WRP! Yet within two months Banda produced his "27 Reasons," which constitutes a total repudiation of the entire historically-developed program of the International Committee.

The ideas were not conjured up in Banda's head in the weeks after the split. They are an articulation of right-wing liquidationist positions that had long been incubating in the leadership of the Workers Revolutionary Party. As he himself admits: "My only regret is that I didn't write this 10 years ago." This statement confirms that during the past decade, the leadership of the WRP was moving inexorably toward a break with the International Committee, as the party drifted further and further away from its Trotskyist foundations and toward opportunism. During that entire period, Banda, Healy and Slaughter functioned as an unprincipled clique within the International Committee, systematically subordinating

the struggle to build a world party to the immediate practical needs of the WRP in Britain. They brazenly lied to their international "comrades," presented false political reports, suppressed political criticisms and plundered the resources of IC sections. No two men worked harder to build up Healy's personal prestige in the world movement, that is, to cover up the opportunist degeneration of the WRP, than Banda and Slaughter.

Liquidationism is a social, not an individual, phenomenon: the product of the intense pressure of imperialism on the workers' movement. In his "27 Reasons" Banda is speaking not only for himself, but for an entire layer of middle-class radicals and intellectuals within the WRP who have given up on Trotskyism, the working class and the social revolution. Banda's document is merely the finished form assumed by the revisionist positions which had been steadily gathering strength inside the WRP for more than 10 years prior to the split. Any serious study of the political line of the WRP over the past decade would demonstrate that its crisis is bound up with the systematic retreat from the principles and program that had been defended by the British Trotskyists between 1961 and 1966, when they had been in the forefront of the fight against Pabloite revisionism.

In its struggle against the unprincipled reunification of the SWP and the International Secretariat of Pablo and Mandel, the SLL made an imperishable contribution to the building of the Fourth International. The documents produced by its leadership struck hammer blows against the opportunism of the revisionists and exposed the political significance of their capitulation to petty-bourgeois nationalism. The SLL's defense of the historic perspective of Trotskyism laid the basis for the education of a new generation of proletarian revolutionaries all over the world. In the aftermath of this historic struggle, the SLL realized substantial political gains. Fighting for Marxism on the crest of a rising wave of proletarian class struggle within Britain and Europe, buoyed by the radicalization of broad sections of the middle class inspired by the revolutionary struggle against US intervention in Vietnam, the British Trotskyists won the leadership

of the Labour Party Young Socialists, built a powerful youth movement, and established a daily newspaper in 1969.

However, the response of the SLL to these important gains revealed certain negative features. As the SLL grew in Britain, it increasingly tended to view the building of the Fourth International as merely an extension of its national activity. The idea that the development of the International Committee of the Fourth International flowed primarily from the organizational successes of the British section gradually took hold inside the SLL. In France, a similar nationalist orientation was developing as the OCI — whose leaders had collaborated with the British in the founding of the ICFI and in the struggle against the 1963 reunification — savored its advances in the aftermath of the upheavals of May-June 1968. The centrist tendencies in the OCI, which the SLL had criticized as early as 1967, became even more pronounced as the French leadership accommodated itself to the opportunist outlook of the hundreds of petty-bourgeois student youth who joined the organization.

In 1971, the SLL resumed the political struggle with the OCI, but broke it off precipitously with a split which was carried through with hardly any political discussion in the ranks of the International Committee. While the criticisms of the OCI's centrist line were undoubtedly correct, there were indications that not everything was entirely in order inside the leadership of the SLL. Since 1967, Banda had been advancing positions on the anti-imperialist struggles in the backward countries and in relation to the Chinese Cultural Revolution that were, at least in terms of method, quite close to those of the Pabloites. However, Healy assiduously avoided open conflict with Banda on these crucial political issues. It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that Healy's haste in splitting with the OCI was at least partly motivated by a fear that a protracted struggle against centrism would have dangerous reverberations inside the Socialist Labour League, precisely when the upsurge of the class struggle in Britain was creating exceptional "opportunities" for party-building. Healy chose to ignore the historical precedents which demonstrated again and again that in a period of the upsurge of the working class, the struggle against all forms of

opportunism and centrism inside the party assumes a life-and-death significance.

The SLL made big gains in the course of the anti-Tory movement of the working class provoked by the introduction of anti-union legislation by the government of Prime Minister Edward Heath, but at a serious price. The failure to theoretically clarify the issues which had led to the split with the OCI weakened the political foundations of the party. Hundreds of members, many from middle-class backgrounds, who flooded into the SLL were given only rudimentary political education in the principles and history of the International Committee. The political line of the SLL during this period tended increasingly to adapt to the syndicalist consciousness of the militant workers. This was exemplified in the SLL's decision to issue a program for the founding of the Workers Revolutionary Party that was not based on Trotskyism and its international perspective, but merely on the spontaneous trade union consciousness of the anti-Tory movement in Britain.

When the WRP was launched in November 1973, its leaders anticipated a rapid development toward the socialist revolution in Britain. And not without cause: the breakup of the Bretton Woods system in August 1971 had produced worldwide inflation and an enormous escalation of the class struggle. The dictatorships in Portugal and Greece collapsed. The Nixon administration became entangled in political scandals and was forced to resign. In Britain, the massive anti-Tory offensive of the working class culminated in the first months of 1974 in a miners' strike that forced the resignation of the Heath government and brought the Labourites back to power.

However, in the aftermath of the electoral victories of the Labour Party in 1974, the WRP encountered new political problems stemming from the residual weight of reformism on the consciousness of the working class. The treacherous policies of the social democrats produced disorientation within the workers' movement, not the least inside the WRP itself. Healy was now forced to pay for his failure to develop the political struggle against the OCI. Among large sections of the WRP's members inside the trade unions, recruited on

the basis of little more than opposition to the Heath government, the return of Wilson produced a resurgence of reformist illusions. The ability of the WRP to counteract this trend was gravely undermined by the fact that the leader of the party's work inside the trade unions, Alan Thornett, had been won over to the positions of the British supporters of the OCI. Without revealing his real organizational allegiances and working with documents written by OCI supporters, Thornett came out against the WRP's attack on the new Labour government. In this difficult situation, which could be tackled only with patience and political firmness, the leadership of Healy, Banda and Slaughter resorted to desperate organizational measures that led to the expulsion of Thornett and his supporters, again without serious political discussion inside the WRP, let alone the International Committee.

The most damaging result of this split was the strengthening of a far more dangerous tendency within the WRP, consisting of middle-class elements who, in the wake of Wilson's victory and the general dampening in the level of industrial struggle, quickly became impatient with the working class and rejected the need for a tenacious struggle within its mass organizations.

Adapting to these middle-class forces, who by the mid-1970s were a numerically dominant force within the party leadership, the WRP began to move sharply away from the working class. This assumed the form in 1975 of an ultraleft perspective that called for the immediate bringing down of Wilson's Labour government, which, in effect, meant abandoning any real struggle against both the Labour Party right wing and its centrist apologists. The incorrect political line served to isolate the party from the working class, and led, as usually happens, to an opportunist practice which supplemented the ultraleft policy. The *Workers Press* was converted into a centrist-type of "popular" paper, *News Line*.

Simultaneously, an impressionistic response to the defeat of US imperialism in Vietnam encouraged speculation about the revolutionary potential of Stalinism and the nationalist movements in the backward countries. The search for alliances with bourgeois nationalists in the Middle East

assumed an unprincipled character, which eventually degenerated into an opportunist and mercenary relationship. While the resources acquired through these relations temporarily solved the most pressing organizational problems, the theory of permanent revolution was reduced to a dead letter, and the whole historically established conception of the political independence of the working class and its revolutionary role was systematically undermined. Flowing from this, the essential world strategy of the Trotskyist movement — the building of sections of the Fourth International to resolve the crisis of revolutionary leadership — was abandoned in favor of that long-incubating nationalist perspective which saw the construction of the International Committee as nothing more than a by-product of the material growth and successes of the Workers Revolutionary Party in Britain.

By the late 1970s, the right-centrist character of the WRP's practice could no longer be reconciled with the formal lip-service it paid to Trotskyist principles. The education of the cadre was concentrated almost exclusively on a subjective idealist vulgarization of dialectical materialism championed by Healy. What he called the "practice of cognition" was actually a systematic justification of his own pragmatic intuition which, if correctly emulated, would supposedly enable party members to "speedily" arrive at useful practices without any specific scientific analysis of the lawful development of the class struggle. In one party document, Healy promised to train party members in "what is best described as the unconscious use of the dialectical method" — an extraordinary distortion of Marxism that Trotsky had ridiculed 40 years earlier in his celebrated rebuttal of Max Shachtman's defense of James Burnham.

It was not accidental that Healy could commit such crude theoretical blunders which went unchallenged within the leadership of the WRP. In the name of a struggle against "propagandism," the study of Trotsky's writings was ridiculed. As a specific object of theoretical work, the struggle against revisionism was all but abandoned. Political differences inside the WRP were either suppressed or papered over as Healy maneuvered within a party leadership that con-

sisted largely of middle-class elements with no experience in the class struggle.

Thus, the victory of Margaret Thatcher in 1979 and the establishment of the most right-wing Tory government since the end of World War II found the WRP unprepared politically and theoretically. While formally preserving its ultraleft line — refusing to place any demands on the Labour Party and insisting that Thatcher could only be replaced by a Workers Revolutionary Government led by the WRP — its interventions within the labor movement assumed a thoroughly opportunist character. In virtually every major strike, the WRP defended the right-wing trade union leadership — such as Bill Sirs of the steel workers' union. When the left-talkers in the Labour Party led by Ken Livingstone gained control of the Greater London Council, the WRP became their apologists, going so far as to oppose strikes by transport workers on the grounds that the reformist-led GLC's budget could not afford a wage increase! One by one, the theoretical conquests of the Fourth International and the most basic concepts of Marxist tactics in the class struggle were abandoned. In response to the British invasion of the Malvinas, the WRP first adopted a pacifist line. Later, confronted with a faction fight within the Communist Party over control of its newspaper, the WRP campaigned enthusiastically on behalf of the Euro-Stalinist faction in the CPGB apparatus, arguing, incredibly, that its control over the *Morning Star*, the daily Stalinist rag, must be defended as a product of the October Revolution!

Between 1982 and 1984, the Workers League attempted to engage the Workers Revolutionary Party in a discussion of both its political line and its theoretical method. It produced an extensive analysis of Healy's distortion of dialectical materialism, as well as the WRP's reversion to positions historically identified with Pabloite revisionism. The WRP reacted to these criticisms by threatening the Workers League with a split. From the standpoint of Marxism, this response meant that the degeneration of the WRP had reached a very advanced stage. This was confirmed by the actual development of the class struggle. In late 1983, the WRP uncritically endorsed the vacillating policies of the

printing union leaders and excused their betrayals on the grounds that nothing more should be expected of leaders "of politically moderate opinion," forgetting everything that Trotsky had written about the British General Strike of 1926 and his scathing criticism of Purcell, Cook and the Anglo-Russian Committee.

Each uncorrected error produced new and worse ones. The miners' strike was the most critical working-class struggle in the entire postwar history of Britain. Once again, forgetting all that it had written about the OCI's refusal to place political demands upon the leading parties of the French working class — the Communist Party and Socialist Party — during the 1968 General Strike (not to mention the prolific writings of Lenin and Trotsky on this very question), the WRP never placed a single demand on the Labour Party. This political abstentionism, based on the type of petty-bourgeois leftism that Healy and Banda had conscientiously fought throughout the 1960s and early 1970s, complemented an adaptation to the Scargill leadership of the National Union of Mineworkers. Scargill never called for general strike action by the TUC or demanded that the Labour Party fight for new elections to bring down the Tories. He was careful to avoid a political clash with either the TUC or Labour Party bureaucracy. The WRP adapted to his syndicalist and centrist line.

Partly to justify its rejection of the struggle to expose the Labour Party but, even more, an expression of the WRP's extreme disorientation, Healy proclaimed that Thatcher, during the first month of the miners' strike, had been transformed into a Bonapartist dictator. Claiming that the strike would end either in a socialist revolution or a fascist dictatorship, the WRP excluded the possibility of another Labour government and categorically rejected any suggestion that the Labour Party should be compelled to fight for the bringing down of Thatcher in order to defend the miners. At a public rally in November 1984, Healy declared: "If the miners are defeated we will be illegal in Thatcher's Britain. She not only intends to press ahead to destroy the trade unions, she is going to make the most revolutionary elements in the struggle opposed to her illegal."



Having predicted that a return to work by the miners without a victory would signify a defeat of the working class, the consolidation of dictatorship and the probable illegalization of the WRP, the end of the strike shook the party to its very roots. The collapse of the simplistic perspective of "imminent revolution," an infantile caricature of Marxism, unleashed a wave of pent-up petty-bourgeois skepticism throughout the party. The defeat of the miners convinced the middle class within the WRP that not only the perspective of Healy, but the entire historical heritage of Trotskyism, was wrong.

Against this background, in July 1985, a letter arrived at the party center, written by Healy's personal secretary of more than 20 years, exposing his systematic abuse of female party members. For the next three months, the WRP Political Committee attempted to cover up the scandal. Principled efforts by a member of the central committee, Dave Hyland, to convene a control commission investigation were opposed by Banda and Slaughter throughout the summer and suppressed. In the midst of this sordid mess, a financial crisis that was rooted in the opportunist politics of the WRP and which had been building up for several years finally exploded. The leadership could no longer prevent the collapse of the whole rotten edifice. News of Healy's personal activities found its way into the membership. Stripped of all political and moral authority, Healy could do nothing to control the ensuing anti-Trotskyist rampage which his entire political line over the previous decade had prepared. Indeed, he himself had lost all confidence in the historic perspective of the Fourth International and for that very reason had been unable to restrain his own demoralized abuse of authority.

In October 1985, the pent-up resentments of the middle class exploded inside the WRP. Disillusioned and bitter, fed up with years of hard work which had produced no rewards, dissatisfied with their personal situations, anxious to make up for lost time, and simply sick and tired of all talk of revolution, the subjective rage of these middle-class forces — led by a motley crew of semiretired university lecturers — was translated politically into liquidationism. Precisely because its source lay not only in the subjective errors of the

WRP leadership, but more fundamentally in objective changes in class relations, the skepticism which swept through large sections of the party was the expression of a powerful social tendency within the Workers Revolutionary Party.

The inflationary instability of the 1970s and the incapacity of reformism to provide any solution to the general social crisis had spawned a swing to the right within broad sections of the middle class. The elections of Thatcher in 1979, Reagan in 1980, and Kohl in 1983 were the product of this right-wing development, which had a profound impact within the labor movements of all capitalist countries, especially Britain, where a large group of renegade right-wingers formed the Social Democratic Party and allied themselves openly with the Liberals against the working class.

The growth of unemployment; the dismantling of the old welfare state systems; the general lowering of wage levels; the ineffectiveness of strikes; the apparent weakening of the unions; the movement of sections of the middle class, under the influence of Reagan-Thatcher "supply-side" economics, away from reformism toward the right, their abandonment of 1960s-style social activism for hedonistic consumerism and self-gratification: these developments had a profound impact on the WRP. The middle-class forces within it had come to believe what they read in the newspapers: that capitalism had overcome its crisis; that automation had all but sapped the strength of the working class; that the development of computer technology and the exchange of information had created a new economic base for capitalism; that the industrial working class had been rendered obsolete; and that Marxism had become irrelevant. For years they had repeated again and again, without making any serious analysis of the changes in the economic conjuncture or the concrete development of the class struggle, that the social revolution in Britain was imminent. Now — and this is the heart of their perspective — they no longer believe in the possibility of revolution either in this century or in the opening decades of the next one.

Only people who no longer feel any responsibility toward the labor movement, who have broken with all the inner

discipline that is derived from a scientifically-grounded confidence in the revolutionary role of the working class, could speak, write and act in the manner of Banda, Slaughter and their supporters. Their social base is not the working class, but those sections of the middle class whose illusions in the historical viability of capitalism have been rekindled by the "supply-side" economics of Reagan and Thatcher.

The real perspective of these liquidationists was spelled out in a document submitted by RM, a member of the Banda-Slaughter faction, to the WRP's internal bulletin:

Realistically speaking in a *capitalist society*, to be an actual *professional revolutionary*, is an idealist position as it will only earn you a term of imprisonment, for terrorism or riot or conspiracy. The mass proletariat need a party based on socialist principles, but at this moment in time the party must work within the system, as if it doesn't, it denies the real potential of the bourgeoisie and the state, in England especially as we have a great task to break and smash the bourgeoisie as it is the oldest bourgeoisie in the world.<sup>2</sup>

Far from representing a principled struggle against Healy, Banda's "27 Reasons" is the final outcome of the WRP's betrayal of the Fourth International. It is a twisted defense of the WRP's opportunism, inasmuch as he places the blame for the political crimes of the Workers Revolutionary Party upon Trotskyism itself. Banda's document makes no reference whatsoever to the political degeneration of the WRP since 1976. His call for the burial of the IC proceeds from a denunciation of the ICFI decision to suspend the WRP as its British section in December 1985. Apparently, Banda became convinced that the IC must be destroyed as soon as it took action against the political betrayals of the Workers Revolutionary Party. For Banda, whatever the WRP did was the outcome of the founding of the Fourth International and all responsibility for what has happened in Britain under his and Healy's leadership must be laid on its doorstep. To prove his point, Banda abandoned his post as general secretary, retreated to his ancestral plantation in Sri Lanka, where, as an absentee theoretician and in between friendly chats with Colvin De Silva of the LSSP, he set out to catalog all the

banana peels upon which the Fourth International has slipped over the last 48 years, and thereby to justify his own renegacy and betrayal of the working class.

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## The Banda School of Falsification

The publication of the "Open Letter" by James P. Cannon, the founder and leader of the Socialist Workers Party, and the formation of the International Committee in November 1953 mark the great historical watershed in the development of the Fourth International after the death of Leon Trotsky in 1940.

Notwithstanding the inevitable limitations of all analogies, it can be safely written that the split with the Pabloites occupies in relation to the development of Trotskyism the same position as the 1903 split does in relation to the history of Bolshevism. In 1953, the Fourth International was confronted with a life-threatening opportunist tendency which called into question the essential theoretical, political and organizational principles of Trotskyism. All the ensuing divisions among the tendencies which claim to be Trotskyist stem from the issues which were first fought out in 1953.

Just as the split at the Second Congress in 1903 did not resolve for all time and fully clarify the political issues which divided Bolshevism and Menshevism, the split within the Fourth International left many questions unresolved. The deeper implications of the division would continue to emerge over the years. However, all the subsequent developments confirm that the conflict in 1953 was between two irreconcilably opposed political tendencies representing different social forces. The proletarian wing of the Fourth International, that is, the "orthodox Trotskyists" led by James P.

Cannon, established the International Committee. The International Secretariat, led by Michel Pablo and Ernest Mandel, represented a petty-bourgeois revisionist tendency.

The positions advanced by Pablo were a direct challenge to the fundamental programmatic conceptions upon which the founding of the Fourth International in 1938 had been based. With his opportunist proposals for the "integration" of the sections of the Fourth International "into the real mass movement," "the real fusion of the revolutionary vanguard with the natural movement of the class however it is formed and expressed in each country," and the elimination of "all doctrinal schematic barriers separating formalist thought from revolutionary action," Pablo was working, whether fully conscious of it or not, for the destruction of the Fourth International as an independent revolutionary tendency in the workers' movement. His program repudiated not only Trotsky's characterization of Stalinism as an agency of imperialism, but also called into question the revolutionary role of the working class and rejected the Lenin-Trotsky theory of the revolutionary party. In place of the conscious struggle for Marxism against the prevailing and spontaneously-evolving forms of bourgeois consciousness as the basis for the building of the revolutionary party of the proletariat, Pabloism proceeded from a crude objectivism which assigned to the existing leaderships of the mass workers' movement — first and foremost, the Stalinist bureaucracies — a decisive historical role in the victory of socialism.

Between 1949 and 1953, Pablo developed the position that under mass pressure, the Soviet bureaucracy would be compelled to lead revolutionary struggles against imperialism and that the world revolution would be completed under the aegis of Stalinism. Also, Pabloism extended the false claims made on behalf of the Stalinist bureaucracy to include bourgeois nationalist movements in the semi-colonial and underdeveloped countries. The essence of these revisions was the rejection of the struggle for the unconditional political independence of the working class from all petty-bourgeois tendencies. From this flowed the denial of the role of the Fourth International in the resolution of the crisis of revolutionary leadership.

The objective source of Pabloite revisionism was the capitulation of petty-bourgeois elements and, in the United States, sections of more conservative workers, to the immense pressure of imperialism, partially refracted through the Stalinist bureaucracy, upon the Fourth International in the aftermath of World War II. In spite of their subsequent degeneration, it is to the everlasting historical credit of Cannon as well as Gerry Healy in Britain and Pierre Lambert in France that they opposed Pabloite revisionism and preserved the historical continuity of Trotskyism. Contrary to the opinion of Mr. Banda, it is not just the evil men do that lives after them. The objective significance of the 1953 struggle against Pabloism remains a decisive historical link in the development of Trotskyism. Banda has repudiated precisely this historical link. He maintains, "The IC was a grandiose illusion, a contemptible maneuver and a disgusting charade," that the publication of the "Open Letter" was an act of "political skullduggery" planned by Cannon and Healy, who were "tied organically to the pro-Western bureaucracies," in order "to protect their own base of operations."

The supposed bankruptcy of Cannon and Healy was, according to Banda, proof of the underlying sickness of the Fourth International, an organization which was congenitally incapable of providing revolutionary leadership. Far from representing the continuity of Marxism, Banda declares that "by 1951 the FI was *completely emasculated*," nothing more than "a surrogate international, a historical accident and the misbegotten product of an unprincipled alliance shot through with opportunism and political double-talk." (Banda's emphasis.) The aim of all this hyperbole is to wipe out the political and historical significance of 1953, and to justify his own desertion. In order to cover up his capitulation to the method and outlook of Pabloite revisionism, Banda summons every adverb and adjective in his arsenal of invective to denounce those who fought it.

There is a direct connection between this grotesque revision of the history of the Fourth International and Banda's activity in Sri Lanka in late 1985, where he entered into discussions with the LSSP during his extended "leave of absence" from his post as general secretary of the WRP. In

1953 the LSSP, while claiming to disagree with Pablo's political conclusions, opposed the issuing of the "Open Letter" and the founding of the International Committee. As events were soon to demonstrate, the struggle against revisionism within the Fourth International cut across the LSSP's adaptation to Stalinism and bourgeois nationalism, which culminated in 1964 with its entrance into a coalition government. Retracing the steps of the LSSP, Banda attempts a belated defense of its opportunism by denigrating and slandering those who formed the International Committee. He will stop at nothing to discredit the Fourth International and prove that Pabloism cannot be blamed for liquidating the Fourth International. Banda insists that there was nothing left to liquidate by 1953, that its political collapse occurred before the founding of the International Committee.

His "27 Reasons" is characterized by a polemical recklessness that is derived from this "anything goes" attitude. Banda even makes the incredible statement, "The murder of Trotsky and the war, far from solving the unfinished problems and accelerating the development of the FI, in fact had the opposite effect" — *suggesting that Trotsky's assassination should have had a positive effect*. One might dismiss this sentence as a misprint were it not that it is entirely in keeping with the essential thrust of Banda's arguments: that in founding the Fourth International, Trotsky committed a disastrous blunder and bequeathed to the workers' movement a political monstrosity. Banda's "reexamination" of the Fourth International's history amounts to a systematic vilification of its leaders, whom he describes as "petty bourgeois dilettantes, charlatans and fantasists masquerading as a 'world party,'" "a self-perpetuating bureaucratic clique," "fleas," "reformist humbugs," and even "Jesuit missionaries." The principal devil figure in Banda's repulsive depiction of the Fourth International is not Healy, but rather James P. Cannon, whose unforgivable crimes, aside from being born in the United States, are almost too numerous to detail. Banda's indictment accuses Cannon of:

(1) a "disgusting accommodation to Norman Thomas and the US Socialist Party in 1934-35"; (2) a "criminal betrayal" — indeed, the "greatest betrayal of Trotskyism" — in the



Minneapolis sedition trial of 1941, where the "strategy and tactics of revolutionary defeatism were shamelessly abandoned"; (3) "political cowardice and capitulation to the backward sections of the US working class"; (4) the transformation of Trotskyism into "a fetishistic dogma"; (5) a "national-defensist orientation covered up in seemingly revolutionary terms"; (6) having "apotheosized American exceptionalism"; (7) "adapting to the left Democrats in the US and keeping a shameless and inscrutable silence on the Rosenberg executions"; (8) "an appalling indifference to the persecution of the US Communist Party"; (9) having "never considered the CP a legitimate part of the working class"; (10) "a pacifist-moral outrage" to the Korean War; (11) the deliberate creation of "a Frankenstein Monster in the form of Pablo"; and (12) knowing "little about fascism and even less about class relations in the US."

As we will later prove, Banda's attack on the SWP and Cannon is specifically aimed at discrediting the struggle waged in 1953 against Pabloism. His vilification of Cannon is essentially a repeat of the slanders of the American Pabloites, the most right-wing of all the revisionists. According to Banda, Cannon was not the only demon. The entire Fourth International, he tells us, was "bereft of Trotsky's dialectical ability and vision" and "did not even have the gift of hindsight." It "abstained from participating in the Resistance and played little or no part in the struggle to project a revolutionary defeatist line." Its "impressionistic eclecticism reached abnormal proportions" at the end of World War II. It was guilty of "shameless toadying to bourgeois democracy," bowed to "Mandel's Zionist proclivities," and its internal struggle against the right-wing Morrow-Goldman tendency was merely "an alibi and convenient diversion which did nothing to stop the descent into pragmatism of the worst kind."

In Banda's approach to the history of the Fourth International, one little thing is forgotten: the class struggle and its material foundations in the conflict between the development of the productive forces and the prevailing social relations. The historical development of the Fourth International is reduced to the petty conflicts between bad and generally

stupid people — of course, all the events referred to above occurred before Banda appeared on the scene — whose actions are to be explained from their personal and, as a rule, self-seeking motives.

Except for the unexplained “miracle” of Trotsky’s genius, there has been absolutely no reason, except for the personal ambitions of a few individuals, representing nobody but themselves, for the existence of the Fourth International. Its history, according to Banda, is a “sorry and lugubrious tale” which culminated in “bureaucratic slander, political chicanery and moral depravity of the most sordid kind.” Not since the days of the Moscow Trials, when Stalin’s Vizhinsky delivered his final summations in the Hall of Columns and appealed for prearranged death sentences (“Shoot the dogs gone mad”), has the Trotskyist movement been described in such terms.

Banda leaps from one isolated episode to another; and the transitions which he arbitrarily constructs between different events lack any internal logical connection. On the basis of his method, one can “demonstrate” not only the bankruptcy of the Fourth International, but also the entire development of the workers’ movement and the history of mankind in general. Banda has taken us back to the historical subjectivism of the old vulgar materialism which was analyzed long ago by Engels: “Its conception of history, in so far as it has one at all, is therefore essentially pragmatic; it judges everything according to the motives of the action; it divides men in their historical activity into noble and ignoble and then finds that as a rule the noble are defrauded and the ignoble are victorious. Hence it follows for the old materialism that nothing very edifying is to be got from the study of history....” This old materialism, Engels explained, never asked itself, “What driving forces in turn stand behind these motives? What are the historical causes which transform themselves into these motives in the brains of the actors?”<sup>1</sup>

The foundation of all political parties and their respective programs is the class struggle, through which the opposed and irreconcilable material interests of different social strata associated with definite historically-formed relations of production are fought out. To disregard the mighty historical

processes out of which parties of different classes are formed, or to refer to the leaderships of different tendencies within the workers' movement as "self-perpetuating cliques" and "fantasists masquerading as a 'world party'," is to descend to the level of the capitalist police, who habitually attribute every articulation of the distinct class interests of the proletariat to the manipulations and intrigues of "self-proclaimed leaders." Banda is incapable of even attempting to establish the connection between the historical development of the international class struggle and the necessary forms of its reflection in the political and ideological struggles within the Fourth International. Rather, proceeding from his theoretically-bankrupt subjective method, his account of the work of the Fourth International is built upon malicious distortions, outright fabrications and cynical half-truths. In virtually every reference he makes to the history of the FI between 1940 and 1953, Banda exposes an almost unbelievable ignorance of the actual facts.

The lies and internal contradictions in Banda's document express the absence of an integrated historical perspective, which is the consequence of his abandonment of the materialist conception of history. Banda employs the subjective yardstick of a rationalist in his judgment of men and their actions. The historical necessity underlying the creation of the Fourth International is conveniently forgotten or explicitly denied: the transformation of both the Second and Third Internationals into the agencies of imperialism within the workers' movement and the organic inability of the national bourgeoisie of the backward countries to carry through the tasks of the democratic revolution and initiate the socialist reconstruction of society. Merciless in his criticisms of the various failings and foibles of the Trotskyists, Banda, like all renegades, passes over in silence the gigantic betrayals of social democracy and Stalinism that have resulted in the deaths of millions.

That the Fourth International, in the course of its long history — and especially in the aftermath of the assassination of Trotsky — has made mistakes, passed through periods of political confusion, contended with unworthy leaders cannot be denied. There is no royal road to truth, let alone to the

liberation of man from capitalist exploitation. The Fourth International is not diminished because it may at certain times have made false or incomplete evaluations of the complex and original social phenomena that emerged after the conclusion of World War II. After all, it concerned itself with questions which simply could not arise within the Stalinist parties. While the latter were proclaiming Tito a fascist, the Trotskyists were striving to understand the class nature of Yugoslavia.

This "difference" in the manner in which the problem of Titoism was tackled was not simply one of intellectual approach. It stemmed from the irreconcilable class antagonism between Trotskyism and Stalinism. There exists no other movement that represents the historic interests of the proletariat as the revolutionary class, bases itself consciously on the lessons of October 1917, embodies the historical development of Marxism, has set itself the task of smashing the bureaucratic agents of imperialism, and whose program is the world socialist revolution. This, for us, is the heart of the matter.

We propose to systematically review Banda's indictment of Cannon and the Socialist Workers Party, which constitutes the core of his attack on the history of the Fourth International prior to the founding of the International Committee. Though this requires that we reproduce lengthy quotations, this is necessary to demonstrate the dishonesty and incompetence with which Banda deals with the historical record. This exposure is a revolutionary duty, for as Cannon once said, "To falsify party history means to poison the well from which the young party members have to drink."<sup>2</sup>

Our examination will show that Banda, in the formulation of his "27 Reasons," bases himself consistently upon all the old enemies of the Trotskyist movement. Banda's brain has become a sort of garbage dump where old revisionist trash is gathered and recycled. He parrots allegations that were made and refuted years and even decades ago. He sides with Oehler and the ultralefts against Trotsky and Cannon. He accepts as bonafide the slanders peddled by Shachtman, Morrow and, above all, the Pabloite Bert Cochran against Cannon and the Fourth International. A large portion of Banda's attack

on the SWP draws its inspiration from the principal document written in 1953 by the American supporters of Pablo, which was called, "The Roots of the Party Crisis." First, however, we must deal with Banda's attempt to distort the history of the Trotskyist movement in the United States prior to the founding of the SWP.

Banda alleges that Cannon was guilty of a "disgusting capitulation to Norman Thomas in 1934-35." He says nothing more about this unsavory episode in the history of American Trotskyism. But his brevity on the subject is understandable, as it is clear that Banda does not know what he is talking about. We suspect that Banda is referring to the entry of the American Trotskyists into the Socialist Party. We say "suspect" because in that case Banda has his dates wrong. In 1934-35 the Trotskyists carried out a fusion with the American Workers Party led by the noted radical, the Rev. A.J. Muste. The formation of the Workers Party of the United States, the product of this fusion, marked an important step forward in the development of a genuine Trotskyist party.

Capitalizing on the radicalization of the working class and the growth of their own prestige following the Minneapolis General Strike of 1934, the fusion enabled the Trotskyists to broaden their base among an important section of militant workers and radicals. This initiative enjoyed the full support of Trotsky.

In 1936, the question of entry into the Socialist Party became a burning issue for the Trotskyists. The real author of this "disgusting accommodation" was not James P. Cannon, but Leon Trotsky. As early as 1934, after the collapse of the Third International and the victory of fascism in Germany, Trotsky had noted the development of a left-wing tendency within a number of social democratic parties, especially in France. The "French turn" — tactical entry by the Trotskyists into the SFIO to influence and exploit this political ferment in order to win new forces — was proposed by Trotsky. It met furious opposition from sectarian elements who had grown thoroughly accustomed to a propagandist existence in small groups.

Among the most embittered opponents of the "French turn" was Hugo Oehler, the leader of a sectarian tendency

within the Communist League of America (as the American section of the International Left Opposition was known until the fusion with the Musteites). He insisted, despite the obvious successes of the French Trotskyists, that their entry into a party affiliated with the Second International represented an impermissible betrayal of Marxism. The struggle waged by Trotsky against Oehler constituted an enormously important chapter in the theoretical preparation of the Fourth International. Describing Oehler, Trotsky wrote:

Each sectarian wants to have his own labor movement. By the repetition of magic formulas he thinks to force an entire class to group itself around him. But instead of bewitching the proletariat, he always ends up by demoralizing and dispersing his own little sect....

Such a man can remain tranquil and friendly so long as the life of the organization continues to revolve in familiar circles. But woe be it if events bring about a radical change! The sectarian no longer recognizes his world. All reality stands marshaled against him and, since the facts flout him, he turns his back on them and comforts himself with rumors, suspicions, and fantasies. He thus becomes a source of slanders without being, by nature, a slanderer. He is not dishonest. He is simply in irreconcilable conflict with reality.<sup>3</sup>

The application of the "French turn" in the United States came somewhat later and, of course, under different circumstances. Unlike the European sections of the Second International, the party of Norman Thomas did not have a mass base in the American working class. However, the peculiarities of the political development of the workers' movement in the United States did not invalidate the importance of a tactical orientation toward the Socialist Party. The development of a political crisis inside the Socialist Party in late 1935, involving a split by the right-wing faction, suddenly opened up enormous possibilities for the Trotskyists.

Concerned that the Stalinists would exploit the split to their advantage, Trotsky instructed Cannon and Shachtman to enter the Socialist Party as quickly as possible. To underscore his anxiety, he cabled his instructions. On the same day, January 24, 1936, he amplified his instructions in

a letter to Cannon and Shachtman, the principal leaders of the Trotskyist movement in the United States at that time:

When a tested and stable organization enters a centrist party, it may be a correct or an incorrect tactical step, i.e., it can bring great gains or it can bring none. (The latter is, in any case, under the present circumstances, unlikely.) But it is not a *capitulation*. The split in the Socialist Party is of the greatest importance as an objective symptom for the tendencies of its development. I am also in agreement with you that one should not give the centrist leadership any time to allow for the possibility of consolidation; this means: *act quickly*.<sup>4</sup>

On February 6, 1936 Trotsky wrote again:

It can be said: What do we care about the development in the SP? We go our own way. But this is precisely the way of the Oehlerites, which leads from nothing to nothing. But if we are of the opinion that the situation in the SP offers significant possibilities, we should promptly make a courageous turn, without losing time, enter the party, constitute ourselves as a faction, prevent the destructive work of the Stalinists, and thus take an important step forward.<sup>5</sup>

Emphasizing the danger posed by the Stalinists, Trotsky warned:

In the American milieu, the unhampered rapprochement of the Socialist and Communist parties would signify the greatest impediment to us for a whole period. To refuse to see this would really be blindness....

A political radicalization in America will, in the next months and perhaps also in the next few years, benefit primarily the Communists and the Socialists, especially if they form a firmly cohesive united front. The Workers Party in such a case would remain on the side, almost entirely as a purely propagandistic organization, with all the consequences of the internal quarrel over missed opportunities. A speedy entry would prevent the demoralization of the Socialist left wing by the Stalinists, expose the incorrigible centrist leaders, promote clarification in the workers' vanguard, and precisely thereby strengthen our positions for the future.<sup>6</sup>

If Banda wishes to denounce the "disgusting accommodation" to Norman Thomas, then he should at least have the

honesty to name the real target of his attack: Leon Trotsky. All the discussions on the "French turn" revealed Trotsky's mastery of the dialectical method and his capacity for abrupt turns. Sterile opposition to this tactical initiative on the basis of formal references to the historic crimes of the Second International evaded a concrete analysis of the contradictions in the old parties of the working class. Trotsky was not unmindful of the dangers which were associated with the "French turn": entryism, even under the most favorable circumstances, is always a double-edged sword. The precondition for the application of the entry tactic is always the political firmness of the Trotskyist cadre and its capacity to resist the class pressures which are intensified when working within a hostile milieu.

During the year in which the American Trotskyists worked within the Socialist Party, Trotsky carefully looked for traces of accommodation to the centrist milieu, which he found and subjected to sharp criticism. In his *History of American Trotskyism*, Cannon admitted:

There is no doubt at all that the leaders of our movement adapted themselves a little too much to the centrist officialdom of the Socialist Party. A certain amount of formal adaptation was absolutely necessary in order to gain the possibilities of normal work in the organization. But this adaptation undoubtedly was carried too far in some cases and led to illusions and fostered deviations on the part of some members of our movement.<sup>7</sup>

This type of straightforward self-criticism, which was never practiced by Healy or Banda, was a frank admission that the Trotskyists made mistakes in the course of the new experience. Cannon, to his credit, never claimed infallibility. At any rate, his deviations on this question were far smaller than those of Shachtman and Burnham, who made themselves at home inside the New York branch of the Socialist Party. If Cannon, who spent a good part of that year in California, is to be criticized, it must be for becoming somewhat too immersed in his trade union activity. However, that tendency, which was part of his political makeup as a "genuine workers' leader" (as Trotsky described him), was not without its redeeming features!



The application of the "French turn" in the United States was a great political success, and it led directly to the formation of the Socialist Workers Party. When the right-centrists in the SP began a crackdown against the Trotskyists, Cannon effectively organized the counterattack and under the guidance of Trotsky prepared conscientiously for the necessary split. By the time the break came, the Trotskyists had won the overwhelming majority of the Socialist Party youth and important forces within the trade unions. This made possible the organization of the founding conference of the SWP in Chicago on the last day of December 1937 and New Year's Day 1938.

The work within the Socialist Party had enormous international significance for the world Trotskyist movement. The application of the "French turn" in the United States coincided with the organization of the Moscow Trials. As Cannon recalled in his *History*:

It was required for us historically, at that crucial moment, to be members of the Socialist Party and by that to have closer access to elements — liberals, intellectuals and half-radical political people — who were necessary for the great political task of the Trotsky Defense Committee. I don't think Stalin could have arranged those trials as well at any other time to insure their complete discreditment as in the summer of 1936. We were then in the most favorable situation as members of the Socialist Party — and, therefore, surrounded to a certain extent with the protective coloration of a half-way respectable party — and we couldn't be isolated as a small group of Trotskyists, mobbed and lynched, as they planned to do. We conducted a terrific campaign to expose the trials and defend Trotsky. The Stalinists, for all their vast resources of apparatus, press, stooge organizations and money, were put on the defensive from the start. Our comrades in New York, assisted by those throughout the country, were able to initiate the organization of a rather formidable-appearing committee, with John Dewey as chairman and an imposing list of writers, artists, newspapermen and professional people of various kinds who sanctioned and sponsored the movement to organize an inquiry into the Moscow trials.

This inquiry, as you know, was eventually held at Mexico City in the spring of 1937. The case was thoroughly sifted;

out of it came two great books which are and will remain forever classics of the world labor movement, *The Case of Leon Trotsky*, and the second one, the report of the Commission, *Not Guilty....* The exposure and discreditment of the Moscow Trials was one of the great achievements which has to be accredited to our political move of joining the Socialist Party in 1936.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to the struggle against the Moscow Trials, which included the publication of Shachtman's brilliant *Behind the Moscow Trials*, the period of entryism also strengthened the intervention made by the Trotskyists against the betrayal of the Spanish revolution. The Marxist classic, *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Spain*, by Felix Morrow, was another achievement of the fight waged by the Trotskyists for political clarification inside the Socialist Party.

Rather than providing a careful and critical analysis of the "French turn," and examining the application of this tactic in different countries over a period of approximately three years, Banda imposes a label, "disgusting accommodation to Norman Thomas," over the entire experience. This is characteristic of Banda's formal method of dealing with the history of the Fourth International. In evaluating the complex development of the Trotskyist movement, his mind operates only with the most elementary and vulgar categories: good or bad, right or wrong, success or failure. But revolutionary practice does not lend itself to such facile definitions. The class struggle is a realm of paradox and contradiction, and those who wish to comprehend it must think *dialectically*; that is, it is necessary to grasp all phenomena, including the results of human practice, as "a unity of opposed definitions." That is why Marxists have always placed high value on the maxim of Spinoza, which, by the way, Banda, too, was once fond of quoting: "Not to weep, not to laugh, but to understand."

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## The SWP and the 1940 Elections

The assertion that the SWP capitulated to “Left-Rooseveltianism” and refused to recognize the Stalinist movement as part of the working class forms a prime component of Banda’s indictment of the American Trotskyists. He goes so far as to claim that Cannon, in the course of adapting to the “left Democrats,” maintained “a shameless and inscrutable silence on the Rosenberg executions.” Moreover, according to Banda, “Cannon’s articles on Stalinism reveal an appalling political indifference to the persecution of the US Communist Party and confirm the charge that he never considered the CP a legitimate part of the working class.”

To understand the political significance of this allegation against Cannon and the SWP, which is a combination of distortion and fabrication, it is necessary to trace the historical origins of this charge. The leaders of the Pabloite faction in the SWP, Bert Cochran and George Clarke, first raised it in 1953 in “The Roots of the Party Crisis.” Supporting Pablo and fighting for the liquidation of the Socialist Workers Party, the Cochranites — as if anticipating Banda and his renegade associates in the Workers Revolutionary Party — sought to pour as much scorn and ridicule upon the Trotskyist movement as possible. They mocked the “Old Guard” of the SWP as “museum pieces” and derided the Fourth International’s claim to represent the revolutionary vanguard of the working class.

Pointing to the strength of the Stalinist-led parties in Europe, the overturn of capitalism in Eastern Europe and the victory of the Chinese revolution under Mao, the Cochranites denounced the "barren sectarianism" of the SWP "that makes a doctrinaire panacea of 'independence' and attempts to meet all problems of the movement and perspectives by the mysticism of faith and hope and making a mystique of the party."

The source of the SWP's refusal to break with "outlived formulas" and acknowledge the progressive and even revolutionary role of the Communist parties was the terrible disease of "Stalinophobia" and, the Cochranites declared, the sickest of the sick was Cannon. To prove their case, the Cochranites attempted to demonstrate that pathological anti-Stalinism — i.e., a form of anticommunism — had existed within the SWP for years, and that the presence of the disease had been detected by Trotsky as far back as 1940. They made a huge ballyhoo about the discussion — to which Banda now makes reference — between Trotsky, Cannon and other SWP leaders on the question of the party's presidential election policy, shamelessly exaggerating and distorting its significance. From there, they proceeded to concoct the outrageous charge, which Banda now parrots, that the SWP all but endorsed the persecution of the American Stalinists by the US government. The Cochranites wrote:

Most of the time our propaganda about Stalinism is practically incoherent, lacking in the most elementary pedagogical qualities so necessary in these days of unabated witch-hunt and threatening war when the entire press and all organs of bourgeois public opinion are screaming about Stalinism at the top of their lungs. Our only concern seems to be to attack the Stalinists wherever possible without second thought as to the new circumstances under which this attack has to be made and to the consequent methods to be employed. Our purpose seems to be to distinguish ourselves from the Stalinists — period. The trouble with this method is that very often either the distinction cannot be understood, or the distinction between us and the bourgeois anti-Stalinists gets lost in a flood of invective, epithet, and incomprehensible characterizations.<sup>1</sup>

Cannon's pamphlet *The Road to Peace*, a devastating exposure of the Stalinist line of "peaceful coexistence" with imperialism, was denounced by Cochran and Clarke:

The attitude is so fierce and unfriendly to people who mistakenly consider their movement to be genuinely fighting imperialism, and being persecuted by it, as to cause them to drop the pamphlet before reading the second paragraph. The only conclusion one can come to is that it was written for the party membership — another case of excessive preoccupation with mythical Stalinist "dangers" in our ranks.<sup>2</sup>

Within just six months, those who were baiting Cannon for his preoccupation with "mythical Stalinist dangers" split from the Socialist Workers Party as part of an international pro-Stalinist and liquidationist tendency. In England, the leader of the Pabloite faction, John Lawrence, had secretly joined the Communist Party while working to disrupt the Trotskyist movement from within. The fact that Banda revives the old Cochranite lie that Cannon and the SWP were guilty of "Stalinophobia" — a term used by Trotskyists to connote a politically-uncontrolled and theoretically-uneducated hatred of Stalinism that becomes transformed into crude anticommunism — exposes his own capitulation to Pabloism. Banda's political skepticism and complete loss of confidence in Trotskyism is expressed in his claim that the Fourth International was unable to appreciate "the world-historical significance" of either the Chinese, Yugoslav and Indochinese revolutions or the defeat of fascism by the Red Army. From this political standpoint, which concedes to Stalinism a revolutionary role, Banda is easily attracted to the old slanders of the Pabloites. Even if he did not set out to falsify history, his political conceptions condition him for that role. Banda's degeneration has proceeded so far that he does, indeed, identify Trotskyism as a variety of Stalinophobic anticommunism, or, as the Stalinists themselves might say, "Left in form, right in essence!"

Now that we have established the source of Banda's allegation, let us examine its content.

In June 1940, approximately three weeks after the May 24 attempt on Trotsky's life by a Stalinist GPU assassination

squad led by painter David Siqueiros, Cannon and several other leaders of the SWP traveled to Coyoacan in Mexico to consider what measures should be taken to strengthen the security arrangements. From June 12 to 15, discussions also took place on questions of political perspective, specifically, the military policy of the SWP and the party's position in the 1940 presidential election. The discussion on June 13 revealed that the SWP, having failed to nominate its own candidate for president, had not worked out an effective means of intervening in the elections. The only alternative within the workers' movement to Roosevelt's campaign for a third term was the Stalinist candidate, Earl Browder, the general secretary of the Communist Party. Trotsky proposed that the SWP critically endorse Browder as a means of making a tactical approach to the sincere rank and file workers inside the CP. He pointed out that the momentary opposition of the Communist Party to the war plans of Roosevelt, based solely on the fact that Stalin had signed the "nonaggression" pact with Hitler, provided the SWP with an opportunity to make inroads among the Stalinist workers.

Trotsky's proposal was opposed by Cannon and others, who argued that such a drastic shift in tactics, after years of unrelenting opposition to the Stalinists, would not be understood within their ranks nor among their progressive allies within the trade unions. Trotsky made a subtle and telling critique of the trade union work of the Socialist Workers Party, which went to the heart of the objective problems confronting the Trotskyist movement in the United States. Since the great Minneapolis General Strike of 1934 which they had led, the Trotskyists had fought to establish a foothold in the labor movement in the face of violent opposition from the Stalinists, whose gangster methods in the trade unions rivaled those of the most corrupt bureaucrats of the right-wing American Federation of Labor. Of necessity, the Trotskyists had been obliged to form tactical alliances with non-Stalinist forces within the unions who were somewhat casually defined as "progressives." Generally, this meant that these forces were prepared to conduct trade union struggles on a militant basis. The best representative of this element was the Teamster leader Patrick Corcoran, who

broke with the reactionary craft-unionism of Tobin and collaborated with the Minneapolis Trotskyists in the building of Local 544 until his assassination in 1937. Within the limited sphere of trade union struggles, there was a principled basis for the alliance of the SWP and the "progressives" against the Stalinists, who would not hesitate to sabotage the struggles of the rank and file on the basis of sudden shifts in the Kremlin line. However, this alliance was fraught with political dangers. As Trotsky caustically observed, once election year rolled around, these progressives functioned as political agents of Roosevelt.

Trotsky expressed the correct and perceptive concern that the SWP's reluctance to make a sharp tactical turn toward the Stalinists in the 1940 elections stemmed at least in part from a fear that this would lead to a break with the progressive "left-Rooseveltians" within the trade unions. Stressing the importance of a political orientation toward the Stalinist workers, Trotsky warned the SWP not to make the mistake of placing too much value on its alliance with the progressives. Thus, Trotsky translated his analysis of the contradictions within the American labor movement into a concrete proposal for practical action, understanding the very real difficulties confronting the cadre:

If the results of our conversation were nothing more than more precise investigation in relation to the Stalinists it would be very fruitful.

Our party is not bound to the Stalinist maneuver any more than it was to the SP maneuver. Nevertheless we undertook such a maneuver. We must add up the pluses and the minuses. The Stalinists gained their influence during the past ten years. There was the Depression and then the tremendous trade union movement culminating in the CIO. Only the craft unionists could remain indifferent.

The Stalinists tried to exploit this movement, to build up their own bureaucracy. The progressives are afraid of this. The politics of these so-called progressives is determined by their need to meet the needs of the workers in this movement, on the other hand it comes from fear of the Stalinists. They can't have the same policy as Green because otherwise the Stalinists would occupy their posts. Their

existence is a reflex of this new movement, but it is not a direct reflection of the rank and file. It is an adaptation of the conservative bureaucrats to this situation. There are two competitors, the progressive bureaucrats and the Stalinists. We are a third competitor trying to capture this sentiment. These progressive bureaucrats can lean on us for advisors in the fight against the Stalinists. But the role of an advisor to a progressive bureaucrat doesn't promise much in the long run. Our real role is that of third competitor.

Then the question of our attitude toward these bureaucrats — do we have an absolutely clear position toward these competitors? These bureaucrats are Rooseveltians, militarists. We tried to penetrate the trade unions with their help. This was a correct maneuver, I believe. We can say that the question of the Stalinists would be resolved in passing insofar as we succeed in our main maneuver. But before the presidential campaign and the war question we have time for a small maneuver. We can say (to the Stalinist ranks), your leaders betray you, but we support you without any confidence in your leaders in order to show that we can go with you and to show that your leaders will betray you.

It is a short maneuver, not hinging on the main question of the war. But it is necessary to know incomparably better the Stalinists and their place in the trade unions, their reaction to our party. It would be fatal to pay too much attention to the impression that we can make on the pacifists and on our "progressive" bureaucrat friends. In this case we become the squeezed lemon of the bureaucrats. They use us against the Stalinists but as the war nears call us unpatriotic and expel us. These Stalinist workers can become revolutionary, especially if Moscow changes its line and becomes patriotic. At the time of Finland, Moscow made a difficult turn; a new turn is still more painful.

But we must have contact and information. I don't insist on this plan, understand, but we must have a plan. What plan do you propose? The progressive bureaucrats and dishonest centrists of the trade union movement reflect important changes in the base, but the question is how to approach the base? We encounter between us and the base, the Stalinists.<sup>3</sup>

Anticipating the immense political pressures that would be generated by the outbreak of war, Trotsky hammered



away at the danger of an adaptation to conservative layers within the trade unions.

You propose a trade union policy, not a Bolshevik policy. ... You are afraid to become compromised in the eyes of the Rooseveltian trade unionists. They on the other hand are not worried in the slightest about being compromised by voting for Roosevelt against you. We are afraid of being compromised. If you are afraid, you lose your independence and become half-Rooseveltian. In peacetimes this is not catastrophic. In wartimes it will compromise us. They can smash us. Our policy is too much for pro-Rooseveltian trade unionists. I notice that in the *Northwest Organizer* this is true. We discussed it before, but not a word was changed; not a single word. The danger — a terrible danger — is adaptation to the pro-Rooseveltian trade unionists.<sup>4</sup>

Trotsky was asked directly if he sensed that there was an element of adaptation to the bureaucracy in the work of the SWP.

To a certain degree I believe it is so. I cannot observe closely enough to be completely certain. This phase is not reflected in the *Socialist Appeal* well enough.... It would be very good to have such a bulletin and to publish controversial articles on our trade union work. In observing the *Northwest Organizer* I have observed not the slightest change during a whole period. It remains apolitical. This is a dangerous symptom. The complete neglect of work in relation to the Stalinist party is another dangerous symptom.

Turning to the Stalinists does not mean that we should turn away from the progressives. It means only that we should tell the truth to the Stalinists, that we should catch the Stalinists beforehand in their new turn.

It seems to me that a kind of passive adaptation to our trade union work can be recognized. There is not an immediate danger, but a serious warning indicating a change in direction is necessary. Many comrades are more interested in trade union work than in party work. More party cohesion is needed, more sharp maneuvering, a more serious systematic theoretical training; otherwise the trade unions can absorb our comrades.

It is a historic law that the trade union functionaries form the right wing of the party. There is no exception to this. It

was true of the Social Democracy; it was true of the Bolsheviks too. Tomsky was with the right wing, you know. This is absolutely natural. They deal with the class, the backward elements; they are the party vanguard in the working class. The necessary field of adaptation is among the trade unions. The people who have this adaptation as their job are those in the trade unions. That is why the pressure of the backward elements is always reflected through the trade union comrades. It is a healthy pressure; but it can also break them from the historic class interests — they can become opportunists.

The party has made serious gains. These gains were possible only through a certain degree of adaptation; but on the other hand we must take measures to circumvent dangers that are inevitable.<sup>5</sup>

An attempt to present Trotsky's intervention as a condemnation of the SWP and Cannon is a travesty of historical objectivity. Through a discussion of the party's policy for the 1940 elections, Trotsky elucidated the fundamental contradictions which arose inevitably out of the actual development and political gains of the SWP. These gains, as Trotsky explained, could not have been made without an alliance with the "progressives" and a degree of adaptation. But this necessary adaptation, positive in one period, was now under conditions of approaching war revealing negative features that required a change in tactics.

Trotsky did not convince Cannon of the correctness of the proposal on Browder. That was a tactical question of secondary importance and Trotsky never made an issue of it. There is no doubt, however, that the warnings on the potential danger of an adaptation to the "progressives" was seriously heeded. In fact, just hours before the fatal attack by the GPU agent Ramon Mercader, Trotsky wrote a letter to an SWP member in Minneapolis welcoming changes in the *Northwest Organizer*, the party-controlled organ of Local 544. "The *Northwest Organizer* becomes more precise — more aggressive — more political. We enjoyed it very much."<sup>6</sup>

One month after Trotsky's death, at a conference of the SWP, Cannon informed the membership of the differences which had arisen during the June discussions. While reiterating his disagreement with the Browder proposal,

Cannon acknowledged the necessity for a more aggressive campaign to penetrate the ranks of the Stalinists. Taking up the main point of Trotsky's argument, he reviewed the problem of the "progressives."

While defending the correctness of the bloc with these forces against the Stalinists, Cannon conceded,

Our work in the trade unions up till now has been largely a day-to-day affair based upon the daily problems and has lacked a general political orientation and perspective. This has tended to blur the distinction between us and pure-and-simple trade unionists. In many cases, at times, they appeared to be one with us. It was fair weather and good fellows were together. The great issues raised by the war are rudely disrupting this idyl. Some of our comrades have already had revealing experiences of how a war situation puts an end to ambiguity and makes men show their real colors. Some people went hand in hand with us on almost every proposition we made to improve the union, get better contracts from the bosses, etc. Then all of a sudden, this whole peaceful routine of the trade union movement is disrupted by overpowering issues of war, patriotism, the national elections, etc. And these trade unionists, who looked so good in ordinary times, are all turning up as patriots and Rooseveltians. We now have a much narrower basis of cooperation with them....

Politically we have no ground for collaboration with the labor "progressives." We will have less and less as we go along, as the pressure of the war machine grows heavier.<sup>7</sup>

Later developments — the Smith Act prosecution of 1941 and the outbreak of war — demonstrated that the SWP was indeed prepared to fight and break with the "progressives" on matters of political principle. On the other hand, the reversion of the CP to a patriotic position following the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941 did not produce a serious crisis within the Stalinist ranks. But the fact that the SWP did not evince the weaknesses of which Trotsky had warned and that the ranks of the American Stalinists demonstrated even less revolutionary consciousness than he had thought possible did not invalidate, retroactively, the significance of his intervention. Trotsky was a Marxist dialectician, not an astrologer. He was fighting to educate a

revolutionary leadership and to provide it with the benefit of his vast and incomparable experience.

It amounts to a farcical caricature of Trotsky's method for Banda to portray the June 1940 discussion with the SWP as a horrific confrontation, in which the existence of a difference proved irrevocably, unmistakably, for once and for all, the worthlessness of the SWP and, for that matter, all those with whom Trotsky worked. In reality, this discussion was a great pedagogic exercise. It was one illustration of the enormously positive role played by Trotsky as the theoretical leader of the international movement. Had stenographers been present on such occasions, there can be no doubt that the transcripts of similar discussions would be found in the archives of Marx, Engels and Lenin. On a few occasions, as their correspondence shows, Marx found it necessary to correct the views of his "Dear Fred," especially on the latter's evaluation of the North's prospects in the American Civil War. Banda happens to be familiar with this correspondence. (So far, but who knows for how long, we have been spared a denunciation of Engels's "infamous capitulation" to Stonewall Jackson.) If Banda cannot comprehend the political context within which these discussions unfolded and conceive of them as anything else but the harbingers of an imminent split, it is because serious discussion of political differences was, for more than a decade, impossible inside the WRP.

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## The SWP and American Stalinism

Banda's attempt to portray the 1940 controversy as an early symptom of the virus of "Stalinophobic" anticommunism amounts to an impudent libel. At no time in the discussion was there even the vaguest suggestion that the Socialist Workers Party did not understand its class duty to defend the Stalinists against the capitalist state.

The SWP had just concluded a protracted faction fight in which Cannon had collaborated with Trotsky in a bitter struggle against the Shachtman-Burnham petty-bourgeois minority, which rejected the defense of the Soviet Union on the grounds that it was led by a Stalinist totalitarian bureaucracy. At the September 1940 party conference, Cannon reviewed the central lessons of struggle against Burnham and Shachtman:

It is important to remember in this connection that our fight with the petty-bourgeois ideologist Burnham began over the question of the characterization of the Stalinists.

It will be recalled that almost two years ago, at the time of the auto crisis, the first real clash with Burnham and his satellites was precipitated by their attitude toward the split in the auto union. Despite the fact that the great mass of the auto workers were going with the CIO — and thereby at that time with the Stalinists — Burnham wanted to divert our support to Martin, even in the direction of the AFL, on the theory that the Stalinists were not really a part of the labor movement.

The thing came to a head again over the invasion of Poland when Burnham wanted the party to take an outright stand against the Red Army on the theory that the Soviet Union is "imperialist." The issue grew sharper with the Finnish invasion.

Then, when Browder was indicted by the government on an obviously trumped-up passport charge, Burnham opposed any defense of Browder on the ground that he did not represent any legitimate labor tendency. He overlooked the fact that as an agent of the Soviet bureaucracy, Browder indirectly represented the biggest labor organization in the world, that of the Soviet state.

Burnham in this case was fundamentally motivated by the pressure of democratic imperialism in the United States. The Stalinists were for the moment at loggerheads with the Roosevelt administration, and the "intransigence" of the Burnham faction against the Stalinists simply represented a cheap and easy form of adaptation to the clamor of the bourgeois democrats. Their opinions were shaped against any kind of recognition of the CP as a tendency in the labor movement. We haven't heard such an expression here today from anybody.<sup>1</sup>

As this quotation proves, Banda deceitfully attributes to Cannon and the SWP the very position, refusal to recognize Stalinism as a legitimate tendency in the workers' movement, that was held by Burnham and against which the SWP fought to the point of split.

But perhaps the stand taken by the SWP in 1939-40 and the statement made by Cannon in 1940 represented only a temporary change in the "Stalinophobic" attitude of Cannon, to which the SWP soon reverted?

In August 1946, in the midst of the struggle against the right-wing Morrow-Goldman faction — about which we will have more to say later — the SWP Political Committee produced a major theoretical analysis of the Shachtmanites entitled "Revolutionary Marxism or Petty-Bourgeois Revisionism." This document was a systematic elaboration of the programmatic differences which separated the Socialist Workers Party from the Workers Party of Shachtman, with which Morrow and Goldman were proposing reunification. In the section entitled "Our Divergent Evaluations of the Stalinist Parties," the SWP Political Committee stated:

The break on the part of the Workers Party with our program on the Russian question has produced the sharpest differences between us in evaluating the Stalinist parties and determining our tactical approach to them. Here, as in other spheres, Burnham pioneered when in 1937, in the Political Committee of the SWP, he proposed that we read the Stalinist parties out of the working class movement and treat them as we would the Nazi or Fascist parties. The Workers Party, cautiously nibbling away at our evaluation of the Stalinist parties, has finally arrived at Burnham's 1939 position, or at any rate one that resembles it very closely....

We evaluate the Stalinist parties in capitalist countries as working class parties led by treacherous leaders, similar to the Social-Democratic traitors. We understand, of course, that the Social-Democratic bureaucrats are agents of their respective native capitalisms, whereas the Stalinist bureaucrats are agents of the Kremlin oligarchy. But they have this in common: they cannot fight for workers' power, nor do they wish to take power except as agencies of capitalism and usually in coalition with its direct representatives.<sup>2</sup>

In April-May 1947, Cannon wrote a series of articles in the *Militant* that appeared under the title, "American Stalinism and Anti-Stalinism," which was later published in pamphlet form. It was written in the aftermath of a polemic with Ruth Fischer, a former leader of the German Communist Party who agreed to testify before the House Un-American Activities Committee. Cannon defined the attitude of the SWP toward the struggle against Stalinism.

It is known that we are and have been for a long time opposed to Stalinism, or to any conciliation with it whatever. We started on this theme more than 18 years ago and have been hammering away at it ever since. We welcome cooperation with other opponents of Stalinism, but we believe that such cooperation can be fruitful only if there is some basic agreement as to the nature of Stalinism, and agreement also that the fight against Stalinism is part of the general anticapitalist struggle, not separate from it nor in contradiction to it.

So that there may be no misunderstanding, let us make our position clear at the outset. We believe that the greatest and most menacing enemy of the human race is the

bipartisan imperialist cabal at Washington. We consider the fight against war and reaction in the United States to be the first and main duty of American revolutionists. This is the necessary premise for cooperation in the fight against Stalinism. Those who disagree with us on this point do not understand the reality of the present day, and do not talk our language.

An understanding of the perfidious character of Stalinism is the beginning of wisdom for every serious, class-conscious worker; and all anti-Stalinists who are also anticapitalist should try to work together. But anti-Stalinism, by itself, is no program for common struggle. It is too broad a term, and it means different things to different people. There are more anti-Stalinists now than there were when we started our struggle 18 years ago, especially in this country where Stalinism is weak and Trumanism is strong, and they are especially numerous in New York and not all of them are phonies. But very few of the current crop of vociferous anti-Stalinists have anything to do with us, or we with them. That is not because of exclusiveness or quarrelsomeness, either on their part or ours, but because we start out from different premises, conduct the struggle by different methods, and aim at different goals....

Stalinism is, first of all, a political influence in the labor movement in the capitalist countries. And it exerts this influence, primarily, not as a police force or a terrorist gang, but as a political party. The fight against Stalinism is first of all, and above all, a political fight. This political fight will never make any serious headway with the radicalized workers — and they are the ones who are decisive — unless it is clearly and unambiguously anticapitalist from beginning to end. No propaganda that bears, or even appears to bear, the slightest taint of Trumanism will get a hearing from the anticapitalist workers of Europe. That kind of “anti-Stalinism” which is currently popular in the United States is absolutely no good for export.<sup>3</sup>

In the sixth article of the series, entitled “Is the Communist Party a Working Class Organization,” Cannon wrote:

Stalinism is a new phenomenon of the last quarter of a century, and is unique in many ways. But this does not change the essential fact that it is a tendency in the labor movement. It is rooted in the trade unions and wields influence over a section of the progressive workers. That is



precisely the reason that it is such a great problem and such a great obstacle to the emancipation struggle of the workers. In our opinion, it is impossible to wage an effective struggle against Stalinism without proceeding from this premise. Stalinism is an *internal problem* of the labor movement which, like every other internal problem, only the workers can solve.<sup>4</sup>

In 1953, the American Pabloites inside the SWP denounced "the outlived 'anti-Stalinist' line of Cannon's pamphlet" and charged, "It became part of the vulgar 'anti-Stalinism' which was to plague us repeatedly in one field after another."

We have now reviewed the line of the SWP in 1940, 1946 and 1947 on the question of Stalinism, and have proven on the basis of the documentary record that the allegation that the SWP never considered the Communist Party to be a legitimate part of the working class is a fabrication. Cannon insisted that the fight against Stalinism requires recognition of the fact that it is part of the workers' movement, and that its representatives must be defended unconditionally against attacks by the capitalists and their state.

We could rest our case at this point, confident that any impartial jury would find, on the basis of the evidence presented so far, that Banda is either a bad historian or a rotten liar. But we have promised to be as thorough as possible in our exposure of Banda's falsifications. So, begging the reader's patience, allow us to plough on.

Banda's allegation that Cannon maintained a "shameless and inscrutable silence on the Rosenberg executions" and reacted with "appalling political indifference to the persecution of the US Communist Party" is a smear. But Banda does not stop there. He even invents a fictional motive to explain the behavior he attributes to Cannon. The SWP leader, he claims, was adapting to the "left Democrats." Unfortunately, Banda does not explain what he means by "left Democrats." In general, these are rare birds, but during the early 1950s, the period of the McCarthyite witch-hunt, they were a nonexistent species. The charge that Cannon adapted to such "left Democrats" — assuming for a moment that he was able to find them — has been made up by Banda out of the whole cloth.

Throughout the late 1940s and into the 1950s, the SWP consistently defended the Communist Party against the witch-hunts and frame-ups which began with the launching of the Cold War, a position which the CP refused to adopt in relation to the SWP. Even as its leaders were being framed up by the US government, the Communist Party continued to support the use of the witch-hunt against members of the SWP, such as the "legless veteran," James Kutcher.

The SWP's attitude toward the defense of the Communist Party was spelled out publicly following the 1948 indictment of 12 Stalinist leaders under the provisions of the Smith Act, whose use against Cannon and other SWP leaders seven years earlier had been enthusiastically supported by the CP. In a letter dated July 28, 1948, Farrell Dobbs, writing on behalf of the SWP Political Committee, proposed to the Communist Party's Central Committee the formation of a united front to fight the prosecutions.

The indictment of 12 leaders of your party under the Smith Act is another sharp reminder that in this gag law the rulers in Washington have a diabolical weapon whose barb is aimed at the working class political and trade union movement....

Now that you are under attack, we, the first victims of the Smith Act offer you our aid. We are convinced that only a united struggle by the whole labor movement — by all the tendencies within it — can defeat this conspiracy to deprive you of your democratic rights....

We ask you not to permit the profound political differences between your party and ours to stand in the way of a broad united front of the working class in defense of Civil Rights. While you did not come to the defense of the Trotskyists when we were persecuted under the Smith Act, we have already made public our opposition to your indictment and are fully prepared to further assist in your defense.<sup>5</sup>

This appeal, which the Stalinists never answered, was in line with the SWP's policy of defending all working class organizations against state attack. Banda then refers to the Rosenbergs, whose executions were supposedly ignored while Cannon was "adapting" to the "left Democrats." Let us again check the record.

Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were executed on June 19, 1953. In the issue of the *Militant* dated June 1, 1953, the front-page headline read, "Witch Hunters Push Doomed Couple Toward Death Chair." Denouncing the "cowardly silence of the labor officials," the SWP called upon "trade unionists throughout the nation to demand action from their union organizations and officials."

"It is not too late to save the Rosenbergs," the *Militant* declared, "Everything must be done to stop the hand of the executioner."

In the next issue, dated June 8, 1953, the headline of the *Militant* read "Demand Witch-Burners Halt Legal Murder of Rosenbergs." The front page also carried an editorial entitled, "Labor Must Fight This Injustice."

One week later, in the issue of June 15, 1953, the front-page headline read, "Last Ditch Clemency Fight in Rosenberg Case — World Protest Rises In Effort To Save Couple." The front page also carried an official appeal from the SWP for clemency, signed by its national secretary, Farrell Dobbs.

In its next issue, dated June 22, 1953 and printed hours before the execution, the *Militant* front-page headline read, "Government Demands Blood, Court Dooms the Rosenbergs." The front page also carried an article reporting an SWP rally in defense of the Rosenbergs.

Finally, in its issue of June 29, 1953, the front-page article is headlined, "Revulsion Sweeps World At Murder of Rosenbergs."

Clearly, the SWP defended the Stalinists against state persecution. What, then, is to be made of Banda's claim, "Cannon's articles on Stalinism reveal an appalling political indifference to the persecution of the US Communist Party and confirm the charge that he never considered the CP a legitimate part of the working class"?

*Political* indifference to the persecution of the Stalinists can mean nothing else except a refusal to defend the Communist Party, which is precisely what Banda claims when he refers in the next paragraph to Cannon's "cowardly abstention." This, we have already shown, is a lie. As for the attack on Cannon's writings on Stalinism, Banda is only parroting the old Pabloite line of Cochran and Clarke, who

opposed Cannon's refusal to equate political defense of the Communist Party against the capitalist witch-hunt with the granting of a political amnesty to the Stalinists.

The Pabloites sought to exploit sympathy generated by the persecution of the Stalinists to foment a mood of political conciliationism toward these traitors. Cannon rejected this deceitful attempt to use the witch-hunt as a means of injecting revisionism, in the form of pro-Stalinist conciliationism, into the SWP. For this reason, the Pabloites branded him as a "Stalinophobe."

The final "proof" presented by Banda of the "Stalinophobia" of Cannon and the SWP relates to the party's reaction to the US intervention in Korea. "It wasn't accidental either that in the early stage of the Korean war the Militant carried a third camp position and that Cannon's intervention in this episode was more in the nature of a pacifist-moral outrage against the war than a revolutionary-defeatist opposition — not unlike North's opposition to the Grenada invasion."

Once again, Banda relies entirely on allegations which appeared in the Pabloite document, "The Roots of the Party Crisis." Cochran and Clarke were trying to prove, in order to support their liquidationist line, that the SWP's position on Stalinism was leading them into the camp of US imperialism. The SWP's reaction to Korea supposedly proved this. According to Cochran and Clarke:

The first reaction of the weekly paper, operating under the immediate direction of the PC, to the Korean War was a Third Camp position calling down a plague on both houses, the Kremlin and American imperialism. Our position was not dissimilar from that of the POUM and the Yugoslav CP, and not too far from that of the Shachtmanites. Now, the Korean War was the first big postwar crisis, testing all prior conceptions. It proved forthwith the complete fallacy of Cannon's basic contention that the main danger came from tendencies toward "conciliation with Stalinism." On the contrary, under the great pressures of the moment, the first inclination of the PC was a position that yielded in the opposite direction, toward Third Campism. It is true that the PC corrected its position in a relatively brief time under pressure of protests from leading

comrades. But the fact remains that a semi-Shachtmanite position was taken.<sup>6</sup>

There were weaknesses in the political line of the *Militant* in the first three issues after the war erupted in late June 1950, but they were not of a "Third Camp" Shachtmanite character. Shachtman supported US imperialism. As for the Yugoslav CP, the inability of Tito to break politically with and conduct a principled struggle against Stalinism was exposed in the support which he gave to the United Nations' "police action" in Korea. (We cannot comment on the position of the POUM because we lack documents on this matter.)

From the first issue, the SWP opposed the US intervention, denouncing both the Truman administration and the United Nations. The headline of the July 3, 1950 issue read, "Hands Off Korean People's Right To Decide Own Fate."

The major weakness in the initial position of the SWP was that it failed to recognize in the struggle of the masses of North Korea a great revolutionary movement of the oppressed against imperialism. Rather, the outbreak of the war was seen through the narrow prism of the political conflict between US imperialism and the Soviet Stalinists.

The decisive intervention in changing this position came from Cannon, who was in California when the war broke out and expressed dissatisfaction with the political line of the SWP. He flew to New York for a special enlarged meeting of the political committee on July 22, 1950 and made the following remarks:

The Korean affair is a part of the colonial struggle against American imperialism. We ought to have the same attitude as to China. Even more sharply in this case because the US intervened directly.

It seems to us this is one of the most important factors in the development of the world situation. Tremendous strength is demonstrated by this movement of the Asian people. They are by no means pulled on a string back and forth from Moscow. It is a real peoples' movement and, at present, the most revolutionary factor in the world. We have to have an unambiguous attitude toward it. As things are shaping up now, it will manifest itself more and more, as a movement of the Asians against American military force.

The correct demands are all stated in the paper here and there. But it is diffused too much and buried beneath balancing of blame. These demands must stand out as the main center of our campaign: Get out of Korea; Get out of the Orient; Withdraw the troops; Let the Koreans settle their own affairs.

One thing is becoming clearer by the facts and we are gradually learning and assimilating it — after the Chinese experience. These are genuine revolutionary movements of great masses, of millions of people. The one misfortune is that they begin under Stalinist leadership everywhere. But if we make that a condition for withdrawing our support or blunting it with reservations, we will be doing in effect what the Shachtmanites do formally and in an extreme sense. They always find reasons to abstain from real struggles.

Not only are these genuinely revolutionary movements, which offer the greatest revolutionary potentialities in the whole world; they are developing a tendency toward independence. We learned something from the Yugoslavia development. I doubt very much whether the Kremlin, by remote control, can manipulate these vast movements in Asia in a puppet sense.

As American imperialism shapes up its blundering military program for the domination of the Orient, we will have to get away entirely from anything remotely suggesting the policy of "a plague on both your houses." There are tens and hundreds of millions of people involved in the colonial revolt. They may well be the decisive force which will upset the whole balance. We have to support all these movements regardless of the fact that they are led by Stalinism at the present stage — insurrectionary movements in the Philippines, Indonesia, Indochina, China itself, Korea.

We think it is necessary now, in the concrete case of Korea to adopt a policy, not merely as an incidental one for a day, *but as a pattern* of our reaction to any further American adventures. Just how we will do that, with what specific slogans in each case — we can discuss separately. But we ought to be clear on the main point. That should be the axis of our line in the paper. A sharper anti-imperialist line. And sharper defense of the colonial movement.<sup>7</sup>

This intervention placed the SWP at the center of the struggle to defend the Korean revolution against US imperialism. Based on the discussion at the enlarged political committee, Cannon drafted a public statement condemning the US intervention. This well-known article, written in the form of a public letter to the president and Congress, is crudely denigrated by Banda as simply an expression of "pacifist-moral outrage ... not unlike North's opposition to the Grenada invasion."

Cannon was not without his weaknesses, he made serious mistakes, and in the closing decade of his long career in the revolutionary movement he succumbed to the intense class pressures that had been bearing down upon the SWP. But in his response to the Korean War, Cannon's strengths came to the fore. Among them were his gifts as an agitator, which he had developed during a half-century of struggle in the labor movement. He had a "feel" for the American working class, and that was appreciated by Trotsky, who had described Cannon's contribution to the struggle against Burnham and Shachtman, *The Struggle for a Proletarian Party*, as the work of a "genuine workers' leader."

In his public denunciation of the Korean War, written in the midst of the McCarthyite anticommunist frenzy and prepared as a personal statement for legal reasons (i.e., the protection of the party organization), Cannon sought to cut a path to the consciousness of the American workers by appealing to their sense of class solidarity and distrust of the capitalists, giving voice to their instinctive hatred of militarism and oppression and explaining the central issues raised by the US invasion. Perhaps Banda does not like Cannon's literary style, but that does not justify the absurd claim that the SWP leader's intervention was merely "pacifist-moral outrage." We will quote the most important passages from the public letter of July 31, 1950:

Gentlemen:

I disagree with your actions in Korea, and in my capacity as a private citizen I petition you to change your policy fundamentally, as follows:

Withdraw the American troops and let the Korean people alone.

I am setting forth the reasons for this demand in detail in the following paragraphs. But before opening the argument, I beg your permission, gentlemen, to tell you what I think of you. You are a pack of scoundrels. You are traitors to the human race. I hate your rudeness and your brutality. You make me ashamed of my country, which I have always loved, and ashamed of my race, which I used to think was as good as any.

The American intervention in Korea is a brutal imperialist invasion, no different from the French war on Indo-China or the Dutch assault on Indonesia. American boys are being sent 10,000 miles away to kill and be killed, not in order to liberate the Korean people, but to conquer and subjugate them. It is outrageous. It is monstrous.

The whole of the Korean people — save for the few bought-and-paid-for agents of the Rhee puppet regime — are fighting the imperialist invaders. That is why the press dispatches from Korea complain more and more about “infiltration” tactics, increasing activities of “guerrillas,” the “fluid” fighting front, the “sullenness” and “unreliability” of the “natives.”

The Korean people have a mortal hatred of the Wall Street “liberator.” They despise unto death the bestial, corrupt, US-sponsored Syngman Rhee dictatorship that made South Korea a prison camp of misery, torture and exploitation....

The explosion in Korea on June 25, as events have proved, express the profound desire of the Koreans themselves to unify their country, to rid themselves of foreign domination and to win their complete national independence. It is true that the Kremlin seeks to take advantage of this struggle for its own reactionary ends and would sell it tomorrow if it could get another deal with Washington.

But the struggle itself has the overwhelming and whole-hearted support of the Korean people. It is part of the mighty uprising of the hundreds of millions of colonial people throughout Asia against western imperialism. This is the real truth, the real issue. The colonial slaves don't want to be slaves any longer.<sup>8</sup>

This statement was used by the sections of the Fourth International throughout the world to mobilize the working class against the US invasion of Korea.



As for Banda's comparison of Cannon's statement to "North's opposition to the Grenada invasion," this author would, under different circumstances, be flattered.

In 1983, the Workers League was denounced by Banda and Slaughter for its response to the US invasion of Grenada in October 1983. They claimed that the Workers League did not adopt a revolutionary defeatist position. The factual basis for this attack was disagreement with a headline in the *Bulletin* which, hitting the streets the morning after Reagan's televised statement on the invasion, denounced the president as a liar. This, we were told, was a "propagandist" response!

Slaughter and Banda especially opposed the stress placed by the Workers League statement on the need to politically unite the working class against the capitalists through the formation of a labor party. They strongly objected to this "heavy emphasis" on the political independence of the working class.

Not only was this criticism an attack from the right, it was factionally motivated and false. In the autumn of 1985, following the explosion of the crisis inside the WRP, Slaughter and Banda admitted that they had conspired with Healy to get back at the Workers League for criticisms which it had made of the political and theoretical work of the WRP in 1982. The allegation that the Workers League had failed to oppose the Grenada invasion on the basis of Trotskyist principles was deliberately fabricated to undermine the Workers League within the International Committee. The fact that such measures were employed by Healy, Banda and Slaughter is a measure of the political degeneration of the WRP leadership.

Banda's criticisms of the SWP's response to the Korean War is mild compared to what he has to say about its position on World War II. That we will deal with in the next chapter.

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## Revolutionary Defeatism in World War II

In the spring and early summer of 1941, on the eve of the entry of the United States into World War II, the Roosevelt administration, working closely with the right-wing bureaucracy of the Teamsters union, prepared and launched a massive state attack on the Socialist Workers Party and its most important base inside the trade union movement, Teamsters Local 544 in the Twin Cities of Minnesota.

On June 27, 1941, FBI agents raided the St. Paul-Minneapolis offices of the SWP and seized large quantities of literature and party documents. A little more than two weeks later, on July 15, 1941, a federal grand jury indicted 28 members of the SWP, including National Secretary James P. Cannon and virtually all the party leaders in Minneapolis, on two counts of sedition.

The first count of the indictment accused the SWP of organizing a "conspiracy to overthrow the government by force and violence." The second count, based on the Smith Act enacted into law the previous year, charged the SWP with fomenting insubordination in the armed forces and advocating the violent overthrow of the US government.

The government prosecution, enthusiastically supported by the Stalinists, threatened the legal decapitation of the Socialist Workers Party. Cannon and his codefendants faced the possibility of years of imprisonment.

The trial began on October 27, 1941 and ended nearly six weeks later, on December 8, 1941, one day after the attack

on Pearl Harbor and the day Roosevelt declared war on Japan. The climax of the trial occurred between November 18 and November 21, when Cannon took the stand. Under questioning from defense attorney Albert Goldman — who was also an SWP leader and a codefendant in the Minneapolis trial — and government prosecutor Schweinhaut, Cannon defended the party's program of revolutionary opposition to the imperialist war. His testimony represented a concise summary of the theoretical and political foundations of Marxism and its revolutionary perspective.

Denying the government's charges, which threatened the illegalization of the Socialist Workers Party, Cannon upheld the party's opposition to the imperialist war and defended its program for socialist revolution. His testimony, published in the pamphlet *Socialism on Trial*, became a basic text of the Fourth International, read by its cadre all over the world.

Eighteen of the defendants were found guilty on the second count of the indictment and were sentenced to prison terms of up to a year and a half. The appeals of the defendants were eventually denied. Cannon entered prison on January 1, 1944 and was released a little more than a year later.

The Socialist Workers Party was the only working-class party that rejected the prowar and pro-Roosevelt "anti-fascist" popular front led by the Stalinists, and for this reason was the sole tendency in the workers' movement in the United States whose leaders were imprisoned during World War II.

Forty-five years after the Minneapolis trial, the stand taken by the SWP is condemned by M. Banda as "the greatest betrayal of Trotskyism," in which

The strategy and tactics of revolutionary defeatism were shamelessly abandoned by Cannon ... in favour of a semi-defencist policy, and this act of criminal betrayal was endorsed by the International Executive Committee (IEC) and International Secretariat (IS) and challenged only by G. Munis.

Cannon's political cowardice and capitulation to the backward sections of the US working class became the pattern for the WIL-Revolutionary Communist Party in Britain and his book 'Socialism on Trial' became the gospel for world Trotskyists and the basis for further revisions of Trotskyism after the war.

With this savage condemnation of the SWP's position in the Minneapolis trials, Banda seeks to legitimize his call for the burial of the International Committee. According to Banda, this "greatest betrayal of Trotskyism" — for which there were no "extenuating factors" — set into motion an unstoppable train of further catastrophic errors by the Fourth International. As Banda writes:

The enormous influence of the SWP in the FI proved fatal in more ways than one. It encouraged during the war the adoption of centrist policies by many sections paralleling that of the SWP and with it — an adaptation to centrist parties and groups in Europe. Healy, a close adherent and admirer of Cannon actually left the WIL and proposed unity with Fenner (now Lord) Brockway. In Europe the sections abstained from participating in the Resistance and played little or no part in the struggle to project a revolutionary defeatist line.

After reading Banda's denunciation of the SWP's "criminal betrayal" in Minneapolis, the uninformed reader could not be blamed for assuming that Cannon arrived in the courtroom waving the Stars and Stripes, disavowed socialism, called upon the American labor movement to observe the no-strike pledge for the duration of the war, and offered to sell victory bonds to help to the war effort. The reader would be at a loss to explain why "the greatest betrayal of Trotskyism" resulted in the jailing of Cannon and 17 other leaders and members of the Socialist Workers Party by American imperialism.

To allege that the SWP was guilty of a "criminal betrayal" can have no other political meaning, if words are taken seriously, than that it capitulated to social-chauvinism and supported the imperialist war. In the case of the SWP during World War II, this charge is manifestly untrue.

Most of Banda's falsifications are derived from old allegations made by long-departed political enemies of the Fourth International. Like pieces of rotting shrapnel that lie beneath the skin and slowly ooze to the surface, the fragments of old revisionist and sectarian polemics that have festered for years in Banda's brain are now being spewed out in *fantastic* and *grotesque* forms.

The source of Banda's denunciation of the Minneapolis trial is a document written in 1942 by Grandizo Munis — a Spanish Trotskyist who emigrated to Mexico after the defeat of the revolution — to which Cannon replied in detail, exposing the content of the criticism to be ultraleft and sectarian. Both Munis's criticism and Cannon's response were circulated throughout the Fourth International.

The SWP leadership's position was overwhelmingly supported by the cadre of the Fourth International. Cannon's reply was so effective that not even the Cochranites attempted to make use of Munis's arguments, though this is perhaps to be explained by the fact that by 1953 Munis had already adopted a state capitalist position and left the Fourth International. As an eclectic, Banda simply skims along the surface of all the historical episodes to which he refers and upon which he bases his conclusions. He assumes that no one will bother to examine the historical record and study the political origins and context of each particular dispute.

Banda's shoddy work will not pass muster with workers who are seeking the road to revolutionary struggle. But he is not writing for the purpose of convincing workers and educating them. The audience he craves are demoralized and declassed petty-bourgeois radicals and lumpen-intellectuals who are shopping for arguments to justify their desertion from the Fourth International and who do not really care whether Banda is telling the truth or not. As far as these elements are concerned, all arguments directed against the International Committee of the Fourth International are "legitimate" items for "discussion." Of course, their idea of "discussion" is rather odd, since they are not at all interested in and cannot be convinced by arguments based on the historical record and indisputable facts.

Banda's indictment of the SWP for a "criminal betrayal" is not only an attack on Cannon, but also on Trotsky. The defense tactics employed by the SWP in the Minneapolis trial were based on the military policy which Trotsky developed during discussions with the SWP in the summer of 1940.

Munis's criticism, which he claimed to have written "with extreme rush," was published in early January 1942. He charged that Cannon and his codefendants

shrink themselves, minimize the revolutionary significance of their ideas, try to make an honorable impression on the jury without taking into consideration that they should talk for the masses. For moments they border on a renunciation of principles. A few good words by Goldman in his closing speech cannot negate the lamentable, negative impression of his first speech and of the interrogation of Cannon.<sup>1</sup>

The gist of Munis's objections to the SWP's trial strategy was that Cannon and Goldman denied the government's charges and attempted to defend the party's legality. Munis criticized the SWP's disavowal of sabotage and its failure to call for the violent overthrow of the government. His arguments were irresponsible and expressed a political instability rooted in Munis's class position. Striking the exaggerated pose of a petty-bourgeois intellectual who seeks to mask his personal dejection with demagogy, Munis rejected all the defensive formulations which Marxists have employed in bourgeois courtrooms for nearly a century.

Throughout the trial, the SWP insisted that its activities consisted of preparing the working class for revolutionary struggle through propaganda and agitation. It denied that the SWP artificially fomented discontent or created disorder. Cannon testified:

The real revolutionary factors, the real powers that are driving for socialism, are the contradictions within the capitalist system itself. All that our agitation can do is to try to foresee theoretically what is possible and what is probable in the line of social revolution, to prepare people's minds for it, to convince them of the desirability of it, to try to organize them to accelerate it and to bring it about in the most economical and effective way. That is all agitation can do.<sup>2</sup>

Such statements enraged Munis, who firmly believed that the first duty of a revolutionist on trial is to make the walls of the courtroom reverberate with blood-curdling rhetoric. He cited the following exchange between Goldman and Cannon:

Goldman: Now, until such time as the workers and farmers in the United States establish their own government and use their own methods to defeat Hitler, the

Socialist Workers Party must submit to the majority of the people — is that right?

Cannon: That is all we can do. That is all we propose to do.<sup>3</sup>

To which Munis replied, "All of which is the equivalent of folding one's arms after some lectures about the marvels of the workers' and farmers' government, in the hope that this will be formed by itself, or by God knows what sleight of hand."<sup>4</sup>

Munis's semihysterical attitude toward the trial was ludicrously depicted in his claim that Cannon "rejected" Lenin when he declined to unconditionally endorse a sentence from the *Collected Works* that was read aloud in the courtroom by prosecutor Schweinhaut:

"It is our duty in time of an uprising to exterminate ruthlessly all the chiefs of the civil and military authorities'.... You disagree with that?"

"Cannon: Yes, I don't know that that is in any way a statement of our party policy.... We do not agree with the extermination of anybody unless it is in case of an actual armed struggle, when the rules of war apply."<sup>5</sup>

Cannon's agile deflection — "unless it is in case of an actual armed struggle, when the rules of war apply" — was not sufficiently *r-r-r-revolutionary* for Munis, whose petty-bourgeois penchant for the dramatic would have been more satisfied had Cannon warned prosecutor Schweinhaut that the SWP Political Committee had already drawn up the list of government officials destined for the firing squad and that those responsible for the trial would be among the first to be lined up against a wall!

Munis considered it impermissible for Cannon and Goldman to have merely predicted that the socialist revolution would, in all likelihood, assume a violent form. "Why not ask forgiveness," Munis wrote sarcastically, "for seeing ourselves painfully obliged to employ violence against the bourgeoisie."<sup>6</sup>

In response to Munis, Cannon quoted Lenin's writings in 1917, proving that the line pursued by the SWP at trial was based on the Bolshevik policy of "patiently explaining" the party's program to the working class. He also pointed out, in

case Munis had failed to notice, that the position of the SWP within the American labor movement in 1941 was very different from that occupied by the Bolsheviks on the eve of the seizure of power.

A party which lacks a mass base, which has yet to become widely known to the workers, must approach them along the lines of propaganda, of patient explanations, and pay no attention to impatient demands for "action" which it is unable to organize and for exaggerated emphasis on "violence" which, in the given conditions, can only react to its disadvantage. When one considers how persistently careful and even *cautious*, was Lenin's party to avoid provocation and cling to its formula of *peaceful propaganda* while it remained a minority, the merest suggestion that our party, at the present time, with its present strength, take a "bolder" course appears utterly fantastic, like a nightmare separated from living reality. Lenin wrote:

"The government would like to see us make the first reckless step towards decisive action, as this would be to its advantage. It is exasperated because our party has advanced the slogan of peaceful demonstration. We must not cede one iota of our principles to the watchfully waiting petty bourgeoisie. The proletarian party would be guilty of the most grievous error if it shaped its policy on the basis of subjective desires where organization is required. We cannot assert that the majority is with us; in this case our motto should be: caution, caution, caution" (Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. XX, book I, p. 279).

From the foregoing it should be clear that our disavowal of "responsibility" for violence in the testimony before the court at Minneapolis was not a special device invented by us "to reconcile the jury," as has been alleged; our formulation of the question, taken from Lenin, was designed to serve the political aims of our movement in the given situation. We did not, and had no need to, disregard legality and "advocate" violence as charged in the indictment....

We are not pacifists. The world knows, and the prosecutor in our trial had no difficulty in proving once again, that the great Minneapolis strikes, led by the Trotskyists, were not free from violence and that the workers were not the only victims. We did not disavow the record or apologize for it.

When the prosecutor, referring to one of the strike battles in which the workers came out victorious, demanded: "Is



that Trotskyism demonstrating itself?" he received a forthright answer. The court record states:

"A: Well, I can give you my own opinion, that I am mighty proud of the fact that Trotskyism had some part in influencing the workers to protect themselves against that sort of violence.

"Q: Well, what kind of violence do you mean?

"A: This is what the deputies were organized for, to drive the workers off the street. They got a dose of their own medicine. I think the workers have a right to defend themselves. If that is treason, you can make the most of it."<sup>7</sup>

Munis repeatedly attacked Cannon for insisting that the party would not attempt, beyond the limits of propaganda and agitation, to obstruct the war effort. He found the following statement by Cannon particularly objectionable:

Well, as long as we are a minority, we have no choice but to submit to the decision that has been made. A decision has been made, and is accepted by the majority of the people, to go to war. Our comrades have to comply with that. Insofar as they are eligible for the draft, they must accept that, along with the rest of their generation, and go and perform the duty imposed on them, until such time as they convince the majority for a different policy.<sup>8</sup>

After first misquoting Cannon to suggest that the SWP leader claimed that the decision to go to war had "been made" by the people ("Cannon endorses Roosevelt's decision as if it really corresponds to the majority of the people"), Munis argued:

Yes, we submit to the war and our militants go to war, but not because it is a decision of the majority, but rather because it is imposed upon us by the violence of the bourgeois society just as wage exploitation is imposed. As in the factory, we should take advantage of all the opportunities to fight against the war and against the system that produces it, just as we fight against the boss in a factory, as a function of the general struggle against the capitalist system.<sup>9</sup>

This is all petty-bourgeois anarchist rubbish. The argument that revolutionists "submit" to war because of violence is, in fact, a cowardly position. Revolutionists do not submit to war

out of fear of ruling class violence, but because their opposition to imperialist war is expressed through the struggle to mobilize the working class along revolutionary lines against capitalism. Marxists oppose individual outbursts against war in favor of genuine mass revolutionary struggle. For this reason, Marxists must go to war with their generation — until the interaction of objective conditions and party agitation convert the imperialist war into a civil war. This is the political basis of its opposition to sabotage, which is a special form of the general opposition of Marxists to individual terrorism.

In response to Munis's declaration that the SWP leaders should have proclaimed in Minneapolis, "We submit to your war, American bourgeois, because the violence of your society imposes it on us, the material violence of arms," Cannon answered:

That is not correct. If that were so we would have no right to condemn acts of individual resistance. When militant workers are put in fascist prisons and concentration camps because of their socialist opinions and activities they submit, but only through compulsion, to "the material violence of arms." Consequently, individuals or small groups are encouraged and aided to "desert," to make their escape whenever a favorable opportunity presents itself, without waiting for and without even consulting the majority of the other prisoners in regard to the action. The revolutionary movement gains by such individual "desertions" because they can restore the prisoner to revolutionary effectiveness which is largely shut off in prison. Trotsky, for example, twice "deserted" from Siberia without incurring any criticism from the revolutionists.

Compulsory military service in war is an entirely different matter. In this case we submit primarily to *the majority of the workers* who accept and support the war either actively or passively. Since we cannot achieve our socialist aims without the majority we must go with them, share their hardships and hazards, and win them over to our side by propaganda on the basis of common experiences. To accept military service under such circumstances is a revolutionary necessity.<sup>10</sup>

Munis also objected vehemently to the SWP's rejection of sabotage: "Sabotage and defeatism will unite at a certain

moment as the two main elements in the reactions of the masses against the imperialist war. The party should not and cannot renounce defeatism without condemning itself to a perpetual sterile chat against the war."<sup>11</sup>

Note carefully how suddenly, in the second sentence, Munis identified sabotage, a specific tactic, with defeatism, the general policy, thus suggesting that defeatism minus sabotage equals "a perpetual sterile chat against the war." He continued:

What seems even more lamentable to me is that one can intuit from the trial that it is not only a question of something said especially for the jury. For moments there is evidence that the defendants really consider sabotage a crime. If I am not mistaken — and I hope I am — this is a dangerous moral predisposition. Sabotage will be the reaction of the masses against the imperialist war. Why be ashamed of it? Why be ashamed that the masses react, as they can, against the monstrous crime of the present war? It would have been easy to defend it as a principle and throw the responsibility on the leaders of the present war. Can we condemn the future sabotage of the masses when the war is a gigantic sabotage of the bourgeoisie against the masses, against civilization and humanity? Instead of receiving this idea, the workers who heard our comrades will have left, burdened with a prejudice against sabotage.<sup>12</sup>

Here was the authentic voice of the frustrated petty-bourgeois radical who did not understand what mass revolutionary action really consists of. The issue raised at the trial was *individual sabotage*, and to glorify this tactic as "the reaction of the masses against imperialist war" simply exposed the fact that Munis had never completed his theoretical and political break with anarchism. In response to his assertion that the SWP defendants should have proclaimed from the dock that "we will fight against your war with all means," Cannon explained:

While we are in the minority we fight with the Marxist weapons of political opposition, criticism and propaganda for a workers' program and a workers' government. We reject the pacifist "means" of abstention, the anarchist "means" of individual sabotage and the Blanquist "means" of minority insurrection, the putsch.

It would appear that Munis' erroneous explanation of the primary reason why a minority revolutionary party "submits" to the war, his tendency to skip a stage in the workers' development and his lack of precision in speaking of the struggle against the war by "all means" — these errors lead him to slide over to equally loose and ill-considered formulations as to those means of struggle which are open, and advantageous, to the minority party of revolutionary socialism.

The everlasting talk about "action," as if a small minority party has at its disposal, besides its propaganda — its "explanations" — some other weapons vaguely described as "actions" but not explicitly defined, can only confuse and becloud the question and leave the door open for sentiments of an anarchistic and Blanquist nature. We, following all the Marxist teachers, thought it necessary to exclude such conceptions to safeguard the party from the danger of condemning itself to futility and destruction before it gets a good start on its real task at this time: to *explain* to the masses and win over the majority.

That is why we utilized the forum of the trial to speak so explicitly about our rejection of sabotage. That is why we denied all accusations in this respect so emphatically. Not — with Munis' permission — for lack of "valor," but because, as Marxists, we do not believe in sabotage, terrorism, or any other device which substitutes the actions of individuals or small groups for the action of the masses.

There can be no two positions on this question. Marxist authorities are universal on one side — against sabotage as an independent means of revolutionary struggle. This "weapon" belongs in the arsenal of anarchism.<sup>13</sup>

These lines are not only a refutation of Munis. Cannon's argument is directed against all forms of opportunism, which habitually belittles the historic work of developing the revolutionary class consciousness of the working class.

Munis's criticisms reflected the disorientation and demoralization of the isolated intellectual, weighed down by the defeats of the working class and utterly without confidence in the revolutionary capacities of the masses. His conception of revolutionary defeatism had more in common with romanticism than Marxism. The very notion that the SWP should take the question of its legality seriously and not willingly

surrender its right to function openly struck Munis as a concession to US imperialism!

Before continuing with our analysis of Munis's criticism of the SWP's defense strategy, let us examine how Michael Banda and Gerry Healy defended the program of socialist revolution when the Workers Revolutionary Party was inside a bourgeois court.

In September 1975, the educational center of the WRP was raided by police after a defamatory article appeared in a capitalist newspaper, the *Observer*, suggesting that caches of arms were hidden on the grounds of the school. The WRP correctly sued for libel and the case finally went to trial in October-November 1978.

Neither Banda nor Healy testified on behalf of the WRP. Instead, they left the elaboration of the party's principles to three other members of the central committee — Corin Redgrave, Vanessa Redgrave and Roy Battersby — and the WRP's attorney. Given the nature of the allegations made by the *Observer*, the key question at the trial was the attitude of the WRP toward violence. In violation of all revolutionary principles, the WRP allowed the tone of the trial to be set by their defense attorney, Mr. John Wilmers, QC, who carefully tailored his presentation to appease the court and the jurors. The *News Line* of October 25, 1978 reported his opening statement.

The plaintiffs "believe most fervently in Marxism," Mr. Wilmers continued.

"They want to bring about a revolution in this country, but a revolution in the sense of a fundamental change, not in the sense of shooting it out on the streets.

"They speak of mobilizing the working classes for the overthrow of capitalism and for the building of a socialist society.

"But they are fundamentally opposed to violence and force. They think they can achieve their aims by educating people in their beliefs and by propaganda."

This opening statement, which went unchallenged and uncorrected by the WRP witnesses in the weeks that followed, amounted to a repudiation of Marxism. This categorical declaration of opposition to violence and force has nothing in

common with the defensive formulations used by Cannon and Goldman in 1941. Let us cite the following testimony from the Minneapolis trial.

Q: Now, what is the opinion of Marxists with reference to the change in the social order, as far as its being accompanied or not accompanied by violence?

A: It is the opinion of all Marxists that it will be accompanied by violence.<sup>14</sup>

The WRP took a very different line. On Thursday, October 26, 1978, the *News Line* reported on the previous day's testimony of Corin Redgrave. It was a travesty of Trotskyist principles:

During the afternoon, Mr. Redgrave was cross-examined by Mr. Colin Ross-Munro, QC for the defendants, about the political policies of the Workers Revolutionary Party.

Asked about the struggle for workers' power, Mr. Redgrave said it was being pursued by peaceful, legal and constitutional methods.

"No armed uprising led by the WRP?" asked counsel.

"Not so far as our aims are concerned" replied Mr. Redgrave.

Mr. Redgrave told the court that the party may consider the possibility of resorting to arms — "to meet force with force" — in the event of a fascist state in Britain.

This would be a situation in which all forms of democracy had been abolished and the majority of people had lost their democratic rights.

This testimony amounted to a repudiation of all the fundamental teachings of Marxism on the class nature of bourgeois democracy. The *possibility* of resorting to arms was limited to a struggle against a fascist state. The testimony which followed was even worse: "Asked where the working class would obtain arms for an uprising, Mr. Redgrave said that it was possible it could come from sections of the army who themselves might wish to defend democratic rights.

"That has been the history of such democratic rights in the past, and that was what happened in Portugal."

When pressed to explain the WRP's official programmatic call for workers' defense guards, the *News Line* reported the following opportunist testimony: "Mr. Redgrave said that the party called for workers' defense guards to protect immigrant

areas where fascist attacks occurred and the police on the ground were unable to give protection. The police themselves admit they cannot cope with the situation, he said."

In other words, Redgrave's testimony presented the workers' defense guards not as organs of defensive struggle against the violence of the capitalist state and its agents, but as an auxiliary force to supplement an inadequate police force!

On Saturday, October 28, 1978, the *News Line* reported more testimony from Corin Redgrave, who was functioning as the chief spokesman of the WRP: "I have not taught violence, I have never practiced violence, and I oppose violence, and that is the course my party has always taken."

The next witness was Vanessa Redgrave. According to the *News Line* report of October 31, 1978:

Asked about party references to the armed uprising of the working class, she said that this referred to specific conditions.

It concerned possible dangers in a situation, when a socialist government, elected on a socialist programme, might be attacked by minority groups. She gave the example of the overthrow of Dr. Allende's government in Chile by the fascists.

The next witness was Roy Battersby. According to the *News Line* report of November 1, 1978: "Asked about the party's call for 'armed insurrection', Mr. Battersby said: 'All the probabilities are in Britain that it is possible for the working class to make the transition to socialism.' But, in the event of a fascist takeover, 'it might be necessary to consider an armed uprising.'"

Banda was the general secretary of the WRP when this trial took place. Alongside of Healy, he determined the political line that the party spokesmen would take inside the court room. Unlike Cannon and his codefendants, the WRP was not even confronted with criminal proceedings. It had voluntarily initiated a law suit against a capitalist newspaper. But in the hope of making a favorable impression upon the jury, gaining petty advantages, and perhaps winning a fat monetary settlement, the WRP did not defend revolutionary socialist principles.

What is most striking about this trial is not simply the pathetic watering down of its attitude toward revolutionary violence, but that the testimony does not indicate that even the slightest consideration was given toward politically educating the working class. Unlike the trial in Minneapolis, the *Observer* lawsuit contributed absolutely nothing toward the theoretical and political enrichment of the workers' movement. Rather, the testimony of the WRP leaders only served to reinforce illusions in bourgeois democracy among workers and to cultivate within the party itself an opportunist attitude toward the capitalist state.

Banda's vitriolic condemnation of the Minneapolis testimony in 1941 and the position adopted by the WRP in a legal proceeding in 1978 vindicates the observation made by Cannon: "In real life the difference between careful defensive formulation and light-minded 'calls for action' is usually, in the end result, the difference between real action and mere talk about it."<sup>15</sup>



# 6

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## Trotsky's Proletarian Military Policy

In his critique of the SWP's conduct of the Minneapolis sedition trial, Grandizo Munis also objected to the following statement made by Cannon:

"We consider Hitler and Hitlerism the greatest enemy of mankind. We want to wipe it off the face of the earth. The reason we do not support a declaration of war by American arms is because we do not believe the American capitalists can defeat Hitler and fascism. We think Hitlerism can be destroyed only by way of conducting a war under the leadership of workers."<sup>1</sup>

Munis replied:

To say that "we do not support a declaration of war because we do not believe the American capitalists can defeat Hitler and fascism" is to give the understanding that we would support it if we believed in that defeat; this induces those who believe in the victory of the United States to support it. Our rejection of the war is based on the character of the social regime that produces it, not on this or that belief about the defeat of fascism.<sup>2</sup>

Munis's objection to Cannon's formulation was a piece of puerile sophistry. The position of the SWP, upheld by Cannon during the trial, was that the Trotskyists did not support a war against Hitler waged by American imperialism. However, were a workers' government established in the United States, the SWP would support a military struggle against Hitler — just as it supported the war waged by the Soviet Union

against Nazi Germany. In response to the questions of the government prosecutor, Cannon defended the antiwar line of the SWP:

Q: And you will seek to utilize war, during the war, to destroy the present form of government, will you not?

A: Well, that is no secret, that we want to change this form of government.

Q: And you look forward, do you not, to the forthcoming war as the time when you may be able to accomplish that?

A: Yes, I think the forthcoming war will unquestionably weaken the imperialist governments in all countries.

Q: You said, I believe, that you will not support the war? You do not believe in national defense at all, do you?

A: Not in imperialist countries, no.

Q: I am speaking of this country.

A: I believe 100% in defending this country by our own means, but I do not believe in defending the imperialist governments of the world —

Q: I am speaking about the government of the United States as it is now constitutionally constituted. You do not believe in defending that, do you?

A: Not in a political sense, no.

Q: You do not believe in defending it in any sense, do you?

A: I explained the other day, that if the majority of the people decide on war, and participate in the war, our people and the people under our influence will also participate in the war. We do not sabotage the war, we do not obstruct it, but we continue to propagate our ideas, calling for a cessation of the war and calling for a change in government.<sup>3</sup>

If these formulations constitute a betrayal of the strategy and tactics of revolutionary defeatism, the blame must be attributed to Leon Trotsky. Cannon based himself on the "military policy" which had been worked out by Trotsky during the final months of his life.

On June 12, 1940, Trotsky initiated a discussion with the leaders of the SWP on its political line in relation to the imminent entry of the United States into World War II. (This is the same discussion which eventually dealt with the problem of the SWP's attitude toward the Stalinists in the 1940 elections. Banda cites this part of the discussion, as we have already shown, to counterpose Trotsky, falsely, to the

SWP. But on the question of capitalist militarism, he finds it convenient to ignore what Trotsky said.)

Trotsky advocated a crucial development in the political agitation of the SWP — away from abstract condemnation of imperialist war toward a concrete program for the preparation of the proletariat, on the basis of the inevitable war, for socialist revolution.

Militarization now goes on on a tremendous scale. We cannot oppose it with pacifist phrases. This militarization has wide support among the workers. They bear a sentimental hatred against Hitler mixed with confused class sentiments. (They have a hatred against the victorious brigands.) The bureaucracy utilizes this to say help the defeated gangster. Our conclusions are completely different. But this sentiment is the inevitable base for the last period of preparation. We must find a new realistic base for this preparation. We must oppose sending untrained boys into battle. The trade unions not only must protect the workers in peaceful times and protect their industrial skill, but they must now demand the possibility of learning the military art from the state.

For instance in the trade union we can argue like this: I am a socialist and you are a patriot. Good. We will discuss this difference between us. But we should agree that the workers be trained at government expense to become military experts. Schools should be set up in connection with the trade unions — at government expense but under the control of the trade unions. This kind of approach would give us access to the workers, who are 95 to 98 percent patriotic even at the present time.

Only with this perspective, not abstract opposition to militarism, can we have success in the trade unions and the military organizations. We can find in this way new routes and sympathies for illegal situations. Of course the technical side of underground activity is important but it is only a small part of illegal activity.<sup>4</sup>

If Cannon is to be accused of political capitulation “to the backward sections of the US working class,” the responsibility for this act of “political cowardice” must lie with Trotsky, who counseled the SWP leader to take into consideration the patriotic sentiments of 9.8 out of every 10 workers in the America of 1940.

As far as Trotsky was concerned, the chief danger facing the SWP was not that its opposition to imperialist war would weaken, but that this opposition would become transformed into pacifism, and thus politically disarm the SWP in the face of its revolutionary tasks, which did not consist in radical phrasemongering but in preparing the overthrow of US imperialism. "Any confusion with the pacifists," he declared, "is a hundred times more dangerous than temporary confusion with the bourgeois militarists."<sup>5</sup>

Trotsky's argument was based on the conception that the Fourth International must utilize the imperialist war for the purpose of preparing the socialist revolution. Thus, in reply to Cannon's question, "Can we be called militarists?" Trotsky said, "Yes — in a certain sense — we are proletarian socialist revolutionary militarists."<sup>6</sup>

On August 7, 1940, Trotsky conducted a discussion with members of the SWP in which he analyzed the political situation on the eve of the United States's entry into World War II and the tasks which would confront the party once the war began. Proceeding from the *inevitability* of American involvement in the conflict, Trotsky sought to develop a series of *transitional* demands through which the SWP could find an approach to the American working class under conditions of war.

For Trotsky — though not for Munis — the policy of "revolutionary defeatism" was not merely a phrase. To work politically for the defeat of "one's own" ruling class in time of war required the concrete elaboration of specific policies and tactical initiatives aimed at accelerating the break of the working class with all forms of chauvinism.

Trotsky drew a highly significant distinction between the general formula, "Turn the imperialist war into a civil war" — which expressed the objective logic of historic development and indicated the essential revolutionary tasks confronting the proletariat — and the specific and transitional formulations and slogans employed by the party in its struggle to mobilize the masses against the bourgeoisie.

Trotsky poured scorn on pacifism precisely because it amounted to nothing more than a "personal" rejection of capitalist militarism which leaves the mobilized masses to

their fate. He insisted that party members eligible for military service accept the draft and participate in the war with their generation.

We should understand that the life of this society, politics, everything, will be based upon war, therefore the revolutionary program must also be based on war. We cannot oppose the fact of the war with wishful thinking; with pious pacifism. We must place ourselves upon the arena created by this society. The arena is terrible — it is war — but inasmuch as we are weak and incapable of taking the fate of society into our hands; inasmuch as the ruling class is strong enough to impose upon us this war, we are obliged to accept this basis for our activity.<sup>7</sup>

Trotsky turned to the specific problem of the political consciousness of the American working class under conditions of war.

Now the capitalists wish to create this tremendous army of millions, to create officers, to create a new military spirit, and they have begun with full success to change the public opinion of the nation toward militarism. At the time that Roosevelt made his campaign speech, there was an outburst of public opinion for isolationism, but now all this sentiment belongs to the past — to the childhood of the nation — in spite of the fact that it took place only a few months ago.

Now the national feeling is for a tremendous army, navy and air force. This is the psychological atmosphere for the creation of a military machine, and you will see it become stronger and stronger every day and every week. You will have military schools, etc., and a Prussianization of the United States will take place. The sons of the bourgeois families will become imbued with Prussian feelings and ideals, and their parents will be proud that their sons look like Prussian lieutenants. To some extent this will also be true of the workers.

That is why we must try to separate the workers from the others by a program of education, of workers' schools, of workers' officers, devoted to the welfare of the worker army, etc. We cannot escape from the militarization but inside the machine we can observe the class line. The American workers do not want to be conquered by Hitler, and to those who say "Let us have a peace program," the worker will reply, "But Hitler does not want a peace

program." Therefore *we* say: We will defend the United States with a workers' army, with workers' officers, with a workers' government, etc. If we are not pacifists, who wait for a better future, and if we are active revolutionists, our job is to penetrate into the whole military machine....

Furthermore, our comrades should be the best soldiers and the best officers and at the same time the best class militants. They should provoke in the workers a mistrust of the old tradition, the military plans of the bourgeois class and officers, and should insist upon the necessity of educating workers' officers, who will be absolutely loyal to the proletariat....

It is absolutely correct that in the first period we will have an explosion of chauvinistic patriotism, and that we will be isolated even more than now, and that this period of activity will inevitably be limited by repressions, but we must adapt ourselves to the situation. That is why it would be doubly stupid to present a purely abstract pacifist position today; the feeling the masses have is that it is necessary to defend themselves. We must say: "Roosevelt (or Willkie) says it is necessary to defend the country; good! only it must be *our* country, not that of the Sixty Families and their Wall Street. The army must be under our own command; we must have our own officers, who will be loyal to us." In this way we can find an approach to the masses that will not push them away from us, and thus to prepare for the second step — a more revolutionary one.

We must use the example of France to the very end. We must say, "I warn you, workers, that they (the bourgeoisie) will betray you! Look at Petain, who is a friend of Hitler. Shall we have the same thing happen in this country? We must create our own machine, under workers' control." We must be careful not to identify ourselves with the chauvinists, nor with the confused sentiments of self-preservation, but we must understand their feelings and adapt ourselves to these feelings critically, and prepare the masses for a better understanding of the situation, otherwise we will remain a sect, of which the pacifist variety is the most miserable.<sup>8</sup>

Trotsky returned to these issues repeatedly during the closing days of his life, suggesting various ways the SWP could develop its anti-imperialist propaganda while, at the same time, striving to preserve as long as possible its ability

to conduct its work legally. On August 12, 1940, he wrote to an SWP member:

We, of course, cannot imitate the Stalinists who proclaim their absolute devotion to the bourgeois democracy. However, we do not wish to furnish any pretexts for persecutions.

In this case, as in any others, we should speak the truth as it is; namely, the best, the most economical and favorable method for the masses would be to achieve the transformation of this society by democratic means. The democracy is also necessary for the organization and education of the masses. That is why we are always ready to defend the democratic rights of the people by our own means. However, we know on the basis of tremendous historical experience that the Sixty Families will never permit the democratic realization of socialist principles. At a given moment the Sixty Families will inevitably overthrow, or try to overthrow, the democratic institutions and replace them by a reactionary dictatorship. This is what happened in Italy, in Germany, and in the last days in France — not to mention the lesser countries. We say in advance that we are ready to reject such an attempt with arms in hands....

This position corresponds to the historical reality and is juridically unattackable.<sup>9</sup>

One day later, on August 13, 1940, Trotsky wrote another letter, in which he again stressed the significance of the events in France, where the bourgeoisie had established a pro-Nazi dictatorship under the leadership of Marshal Petain in Vichy.

The Fourth International, he explained, should call on workers to

categorically refuse to defend civil liberties and democracy in the French manner; the workers and farmers to give their flesh and blood while the capitalists concentrate in their hands the command. The Petain experiment should now form the center of our war propaganda. It is important, of course, to explain to the advanced workers that the genuine fight against fascism is the socialist revolution. But it is more urgent, more imperative, to explain to the millions of American workers that the defense of their "democracy" cannot be delivered over to an American Marshal Petain — and there are many candidates for such a role.<sup>10</sup>

Still another letter on this subject followed. On August 17, 1940 he commented on the "advantages" of the anti-pacifist position of the SWP: "First, it is revolutionary in its essence and based upon the whole character of our epoch, when all questions will be decided not only by arms of critics, but by critiques of arms; second, it is completely free of sectarianism. We do not oppose to events and to the feelings of the masses an abstract affirmation of our sanctity."<sup>11</sup>

Clearly, Trotsky's perspective for the development of revolutionary work under conditions of war was the basis for the military policy adopted by the Socialist Workers Party. Without making any compromises to social-chauvinism, Trotsky repeatedly urged the SWP to find a way to appeal to the American workers' genuine and justified hatred of Hitlerite fascism.

Involved here were not merely tactical considerations. Precisely because the imperialist war expressed the greatest intensification of all the contradictions of world capitalism, and these contradictions were the objective ground of future revolutionary explosions, Trotsky was above all concerned with the preparation of the party for the sharp changes in class relations to which the war would give rise.

He was grappling with this problem on the very day of his assassination on August 20, 1940. In an unfinished article upon which he was working when the GPU killer Ramon Mercader arrived at the villa in Coyoacan, Trotsky made the following observations:

The present war, as we have stated on more than one occasion, is a continuation of the last war. But a continuation does not signify a repetition. As a general rule, a continuation signifies a development, a deepening, a sharpening. Our policy, the policy of the revolutionary proletariat toward the second imperialist war, is a continuation of the policy elaborated during the last imperialist war, primarily under Lenin's leadership. But a continuation does not signify a repetition. In this case too, a continuation signifies a development, a deepening and a sharpening.<sup>12</sup>

Trotsky analyzed the historical context within which Lenin developed his conception of revolutionary defeatism. He pointed out that even on the eve of the February revolution



of 1917, Lenin did not anticipate a socialist revolution in the foreseeable future. The formulations adopted by Lenin, Trotsky explained, reflected the view that the Bolsheviks constituted the "extreme left opposition" to imperialist war, not "contenders for power."

Between the eruption of the first imperialist war in August 1914 and the outbreak of the February revolution, the struggle for workers' power was seen as "a question of an indefinite historical perspective and not of tomorrow's task." This outlook necessarily affected the exposition of Bolshevik policy toward the war.

The attention of the revolutionary wing was centered on the defense of the capitalist fatherland. The revolutionists naturally replied to this question in the negative. This was entirely correct. But while this purely negative answer served as the basis for propaganda and for training the cadres, it could not win the masses, who did not want a foreign conqueror.

In Russia prior to the war the Bolsheviks constituted four-fifths of the proletarian vanguard, that is, of the workers participating in political life (newspapers, elections, etc.). Following the February revolution the unlimited rule passed into the hands of defensists, the Mensheviks and the SRs. True enough, the Bolsheviks in the space of eight months conquered the overwhelming majority of the workers. But the decisive role in this conquest was played not by the refusal to defend the bourgeois fatherland but by the slogan "All Power to the Soviets!" And only by this revolutionary slogan! The criticism of imperialism, its militarism, the renunciation of the defense of bourgeois democracy and so on could have never conquered the overwhelming majority of the people to the side of the Bolsheviks....<sup>13</sup>

Trotsky reviewed the prospects for revolutionary struggle within the United States:

It is quite self-evident that the radicalization of the working class in the United States has passed only through its initial phases, almost exclusively in the sphere of the trade union movement (the CIO). The prewar period, and then the war itself, may temporarily interrupt this process of radicalization, especially if a considerable number of workers are absorbed into war industry. But this inter-

ruption of the process of radicalization cannot be of a long duration. The second stage of radicalization will assume a more sharply expressive character. The problem of forming an independent labor party will be put on the order of the day. Our transitional demands will gain great popularity. On the other hand, the fascist, reactionary tendencies will withdraw to the background, assuming a defensive position, awaiting a more favorable moment. This is the nearest perspective. No occupation is more completely unworthy than that of speculating whether or not we shall succeed in creating a powerful revolutionary leader-party. Ahead lies a favorable perspective, providing all the justification for revolutionary activism. It is necessary to utilize the opportunities which are opening up and to build the revolutionary party.

The Second World War poses the question of change of regimes more imperiously, more urgently than did the first war. It is first and foremost a question of the political regime. The workers are aware that democracy is suffering shipwreck everywhere, and that they are threatened by fascism even in those countries where fascism is as yet nonexistent. The bourgeoisie of the democratic countries will naturally utilize this dread of fascism on the part of the workers, but, on the other hand, the bankruptcy of democracies, their collapse, their painless transformation into reactionary dictatorships, compel the workers to pose before themselves the problem of power, and render them responsive to the posing of the problem of power.<sup>14</sup>

Trotsky, clearly, was attempting to infuse the principle of revolutionary defeatism with the most active, concrete and dynamic content; to establish a living and practical connection between the struggle against imperialist war and the actual winning of the leadership of the working class and the conquest of power.

The American working class is still without a mass labor party even today. But the objective situation and the experience accumulated by the American workers can pose within a very brief period of time on the order of the day the question of the conquest of power. This perspective must be made the basis of our agitation. It is not merely a question of a position on capitalist militarism and of renouncing the defense of the bourgeois state but of directly

preparing for the conquest of power and the defense of the proletarian fatherland.<sup>15</sup>

The subtlety of Trotsky's dialectical reasoning was certainly lost on Munis, who simply saw in the slogan of "revolutionary defeatism" an occasion for petty-bourgeois radical histrionics. In reality, Munis, despite his left-sounding denunciation of Cannon, did not really believe in the viability of "revolutionary defeatism" as a concrete program of action around which the masses could be rallied.

The defensive formulations which he attacked were aimed at penetrating the consciousness of the American workers and transforming their hatred of fascism into a lever for revolutionary struggle against American imperialism.

The Minneapolis trial, which the renegade Banda denounces as a "criminal betrayal," is part of the revolutionary heritage defended by the International Committee of the Fourth International. The Socialist Workers Party was the only tendency in the workers' movement in the United States which opposed the imperialist war while unconditionally defending and supporting the Soviet Union in its struggle against German fascism.

Aside from Munis, the only criticism of the SWP's military policy came from Max Shachtman's petty-bourgeois "Workers Party," that misbegotten product of the 1940 split. It proclaimed that the SWP's policy was "a concession to social patriotism" and an "abandonment of the revolutionary internationalist position" (*New Internationalist*, January 1941).

For all its bombastic "leftist" rhetoric, the real class content of Shachtman's denunciation of the SWP's military policy was middle-class pacifism. This was exposed in the famous August 12, 1940 issue of *Labor Action*, in which Shachtman enthusiastically endorsed the opposition of John L. Lewis to the draft. "In the fight against conscription we are with Lewis 100%."

Trotsky penned a scathing reply: "We are not with Lewis for even a single per cent, because Lewis tries to defend the Capitalist Fatherland with completely outdated means. The great majority of the workers understand or feel that these means (professional voluntary armament) are outdated from

a military point of view and extremely dangerous from a class point of view."<sup>16</sup>

As history would eventually prove, Shachtman's petty-bourgeois ultraleftism was merely one point on a political trajectory which would eventually place him in the orbit of American imperialism. This was instinctively recognized by the American bourgeoisie, which did not view his sectarian rhetoric with undue alarm and never moved to initiate state proceedings against the Workers Party during World War II.

Following the trial, the SWP maintained and developed its defeatist line. James P. Cannon issued a statement on the US entry into World War II that was published in the February 7, 1942 issue of the *Militant*.

The considerations which determined our attitude toward the war up to the outbreak of hostilities between the United States and the Axis powers retain their validity in the new situation.

We considered the war upon the part of all the capitalist powers involved — Germany and France, Italy and Great Britain — as an imperialist war.

This characterization of the war was determined for us by the character of the state powers involved in it. They were all capitalist states in the epoch of imperialism; themselves imperialist — oppressing other nations or peoples — or satellites of imperialist powers. The extension of the war to the Pacific and the formal entry of the United States and Japan change nothing in this basic analysis.

Following Lenin, it made no difference to us which imperialist bandit fired the first shot; every imperialist power has for a quarter of a century been "attacking" every other imperialist power by economic and political means; the resort to arms is but the culmination of this process, which will continue as long as capitalism endures.

After explaining that the SWP did support the struggle of the USSR against German imperialism and the struggle of the Chinese masses — despite Chiang K'ai-shek — against Japanese imperialism, Cannon wrote:

None of the reasons which oblige us to support the Soviet Union and China against their enemies can be said to apply to France or Britain. These imperialist "democracies" entered the war to maintain their lordship over the

hundreds of millions of subject peoples in the British and French empires; to defend these "democracies" means to defend the oppression of the masses of Africa and Asia. Above all it means to defend the decaying capitalist social order. We do not defend that, either in Italy and Germany, or in France and Britain — or in the United States.

Banda's claim that the SWP adopted a semidefensist policy — an allegation upon which he bases a whole series of subsequent attacks aimed at discrediting the Fourth International — is an out-and-out lie.

The SWP waged an indefatigable campaign to expose American imperialism and its allies. A review of the *Militant* during the war period provides a model example of how Marxists conduct anti-imperialist propaganda and agitation within the working class.

Among the most persistent themes to be found in the SWP's press was its unrelenting exposure of the war-time persecution and lynch-law violence directed against American blacks, the brutal increase in exploitation by the capitalists in pursuit of military superprofits, and the violent suppression by British imperialism of the struggles by the Asian masses for self-determination. The *Militant* gave banner headline coverage to the crimes of the British governor, Sir Andrew Caldecott, in Ceylon, and publicized the suppression of the Lanka Sama Samaja Party.

At the same time, it continuously upheld the struggle by the Indian masses against British imperialism. A statement by the SWP National Committee in 1942 declared:

On its first anniversary the "Atlantic Charter" stands exposed as a threadbare curtain behind which the British Empire hides its tyrannical rule over the colonial masses. The Indian masses are getting their first taste of the "four freedoms" of Churchill-Roosevelt in the form of tear gas and bullets. We demand that the terror and violence against the Indian people be halted immediately!

The self-styled "democrats" who yesterday pleaded with the rulers of Britain that some small concession be thrown to the Indian masses today are denouncing the movement and justifying repressions against it in the name of the war of "democracy against fascism." They merely expose their

so-called slogan as counterfeit and themselves as prostituted tools of imperialism.<sup>17</sup>

The SWP fought all those within the workers' movement who sought to legitimize US intervention in the war by claiming that it was the only way fascism could be stopped. When social democrat Norman Thomas dropped his pacifism immediately after the attack on Pearl Harbor, as Cannon had predicted, and declared in January 1942, "I can see no practical alternative today to the war as a means of stopping the worldwide triumph of fascist totalitarianism," the SWP issued a caustic reply:

Victory in this war for the Anglo-American allies would halt the slide into hell even less than their victory in the last war. The root-cause of all political, social and economic reaction today lies in the decomposition of world capitalism. The war is causing so much destruction that the capitalist system can only go from bad to worse, from one degree of reaction to a deeper one, whichever capitalist coalition comes out on top. Hitlerism is not necessarily the most frightful phenomenon capitalist degeneration can produce! Nor is a victory for Britain and the US any kind of guarantee against the establishment of fascism in these countries!...

In this statement Thomas strips himself not only of socialism, but also of the pacifist phrases with which he duped his followers before the war.... He now stands forth for what he really is: a mealy-mouthed hypocrite, who drags in the rear of the social-patriotic procession headed by the Stalinists, Social-Democrats and official labor leaders.<sup>18</sup>

The stand of the Trotskyists infuriated the Stalinists of the American Communist Party, who were then functioning as Roosevelt's political police within the labor movement. They sought to organize lynch mobs to murder members of the SWP. A typical example of the Communist Party's war-time activity against the Trotskyists was a factory leaflet which was headlined "Hitler's Agents At Your Gates!"

The leaflet declared: "The Militant is a Nazi propaganda organ. No patriotic American worker will dirty his hands by accepting a copy of this Fifth Column sheet."<sup>19</sup>

Despite innumerable provocations of this kind, the Stalinists were unable to stop the sale of the *Militant* outside the big factories. Once the Roosevelt administration realized that

the Trotskyists could not be silenced despite the jailing of their main leaders, it moved to block the distribution of the *Militant* through the post office by revoking the newspaper's second-class mailing rights. In a letter dated December 28, 1942, addressed to the Postmaster General, the Attorney General of the United States, Francis Biddle, explained the reasons for his punitive action:

As part of the joint cooperation which has existed between your Department and this Department in the enforcement of statutes in which both have a common interest, I am transmitting for your consideration information relating to *The Militant*, a weekly publication issued by The Militant Publishing Association, 116 University Place, New York, N.Y.

Since December 7, 1941 this publication has openly discouraged participation in the war by the masses of the people. It is permeated with the thesis that the war is being fought solely for the benefit of the ruling groups and will serve merely to continue the enslavement of the working classes. It is urged that this war is only an imperialistic clash for spoils at the expense of the lives and living standards of the people who should, therefore, not support it. The lines in the publication also include derision of democracy and the "four freedoms" as hypocritical shams, anti-British attacks, charges of Fascist collaboration by the United States, stimulation of race issues and other material deemed divisionary in character and appearing to be calculated to engender opposition to the war effort as well as to interfere with the morale of the armed forces. I am enclosing a memorandum consisting solely of excerpts taken from *The Militant* since December 7, 1941.

I suggest that you may wish to consider the issuance of an order to show cause why *The Militant* should not be denied the second-class mailing privilege. In this connection you will recall that in previous cases I called your attention to Section 3 of Title I of the Espionage Act of 1917 and to the decision of the United States Supreme Court in the case of *Milwaukee Publishing Company v. Burleson*, 255 U.S. 407 (1921), upholding the right of the Postmaster General to suspend or revoke the second-class mailing privilege of a publication which, over a period of time, consistently publishes seditious matter.

This department offers you its complete cooperation in any action which you may deem advisable.<sup>20</sup>

This document from the desk of Roosevelt's attorney general is the most irrefutable reply to Banda's denunciation of "Cannon's political cowardice" during World War II.



# 7

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## The Fourth International in World War II

Trotsky wrote long ago that a hallmark of petty-bourgeois renegades from Marxism is their disrespect for the traditions of their organization. True to form, Banda goes so far as to mock the memory of the countless Trotskyist martyrs who perished during World War II while waging an underground struggle against fascism.

Banda's political cynicism toward all questions of principle is expressed in the paradoxical charge that the European Trotskyists "abstained from participating in the Resistance and played little or no part in the struggle to project a revolutionary defeatist line."

Banda has apparently forgotten that the program of revolutionary defeatism in those Western European countries occupied by the Nazis could be upheld by the Trotskyists only through a fierce struggle against the policies of the official "Resistance" movements, led by Stalinists and their bourgeois allies, which were rooted in popular front class collaboration and support for US and British imperialism. Moreover, as we will explain later, the Fourth International had to wage a bitter struggle against revisionist elements who endorsed popular frontism in the Resistance movements on the grounds that supraclass "national liberation," not the anticapitalist struggle for workers' power and socialism, was the only historically feasible basis for the fight against Nazism.

After the war, those who shouted loudest about the Fourth International's supposed abstention from the Resistance movements were the most right-wing elements within the world movement. Led by Felix Morrow and Albert Goldman, they were, along with the Shachtmanites, in the process of capitulating to imperialist democracy and becoming transformed into anticommunists.

It is a political absurdity to denounce the Trotskyists for playing "little or no part in the struggle to project a revolutionary defeatist line," because outside the Fourth International, there was no other tendency in the workers' movement that opposed the imperialist war! The Trotskyists were hounded and persecuted by a "popular front" of fascists, "democratic" imperialists and Stalinists precisely because they upheld the banner of revolutionary defeatism and proletarian internationalism.

World War II tested the cadre that Trotsky had assembled and trained during the previous decade. In a life and death struggle whose personal consequences were often tragic, the Trotskyists proved again that they could swim against the stream. In Europe, the Middle East, South America and Asia, the cadres of the Fourth International defended the program of world socialist revolution.

Let us briefly review the record of revolutionary struggle which the renegade Banda dismisses with such contemptible scorn.

The French Trotskyists Marc Bourhis and Pierre Gueguen were executed by the Nazis on October 22, 1941. Their comrade Jules Joffre was shot in 1942. In October 1943, the secretary of the French section, Marcel Hic, was arrested by the Gestapo, deported to Buchenwald and then to Dora, where he was murdered. Dozens of other French Trotskyists were arrested and also perished in the Nazi death camps. Despite the repression, the Trotskyist PCI published, starting in August 1940, 73 clandestine issues of its newspaper, *La Verité*, whose circulation was 15,000 copies.

After the European Secretariat of the Fourth International was organized in 1943, the French comrades assumed responsibility for the publication of a theoretical organ, *Quatrième Internationale*. The Trotskyists also published a

German-language newspaper, *Arbeiter und Soldat* (Worker and Soldier), which was circulated among German working-class soldiers. This heroic demonstration of revolutionary internationalism cost the lives of several German and French comrades, including a number of soldiers won to Marxism.

The editor of *Arbeiter und Soldat*, Paul Widelin, was arrested by the Gestapo in Paris in the spring of 1944. He was quickly brought before a firing squad and shot in the Bois de Vincennes. But he was not killed. Picked up by a passerby and taken to a hospital, Widelin was able to get a message to the Trotskyist underground, which made arrangements to rescue him. Before he could be saved, Widelin was betrayed by a member of the hospital staff. The Gestapo seized him and this time made sure Widelin was dead.

In Holland, nine members of the RSAP, a party which had been associated with Trotskyism, were executed on April 12, 1942, following a public trial by the Nazis. Among those executed was Henk Sneevliet, who sang the "Internationale" as he faced the firing squad.

In Belgium, the leader of the Trotskyist movement, Leon Lesoil, was arrested in 1941 and murdered. Among his comrades executed by Nazi firing squads were Renery, Van Belle and Lemmens. The brilliant young Trotskyist, A. Leon, the author of the valuable study, *The Jewish Question*, was arrested in 1944 and deported to Auschwitz, where he was murdered. Despite this savage repression, the Belgian comrades produced a French-language newspaper, *Lenin's Voice*, which had a circulation of 10,000, and a Flemish-language newspaper, *The Class Struggle*, which had a circulation of 7,000.

In Greece, Pantelis Pouliopoulos, leader of the Trotskyist "Archeo-Marxists," was executed along with 17 of his comrades in June 1943. When brought to his place of execution, Pouliopoulos spoke to the soldiers of the firing squad in their own language and produced a mutiny. When the soldiers declared that they would not carry out their bloody assignment, the Nazi officers had to intervene and personally carry out the executions.

The Italian Trotskyist Blasco was murdered by the Stalinists. A contemporary report of an eyewitness, published

by the *Militant* on September 30, 1944, described the work of the Trotskyists in Italy:

The Trotskyists of Italy are mainly workers, veterans of Mussolini's prisons, tried and tested in the harsh underground struggle against fascism. I talked with one Trotskyist worker from Rome, a hardened revolutionary fighter. It was from him I learned that there is a large Trotskyist group in Rome and also in Milan.

This worker had first met Trotskyists inside Mussolini's prisons, where he had been confined for eight years. The prisons were veritable universities for revolutionary education. They had formed a Trotskyist group inside prison. From Milanese revolutionists in the same prison, my informant had learned that there were "hundreds" of Trotskyists in the industrial Milan area.

In 1944, with France still occupied by the Nazis, the European sections of the Fourth International organized a six-day conference, managing to evade the grasp of the Gestapo. It issued a communique which correctly summarized the historic significance of the conference:

"That, in a Europe blood-stained by more than four years of total war, crushed under the most hideous yoke of the imperialisms, whose prisons and concentration camps are gorged with the victims of the most savage and most systematic repression, our organization has been able to hold its European assembly, to work out and define its political line of struggle, of itself constitutes the most eloquent manifestation of its vitality, its internationalist spirit, and the revolutionary ardor by which it is animated."<sup>1</sup>

At this extraordinary gathering, the Trotskyists debated their attitude toward the popular Resistance movements. While opposing the chauvinism fanned by the Stalinists and Anglo-American imperialism, the delegates recognized the necessity of penetrating the masses being drawn into the struggle against the Nazis. It was above all vital to fight for the perspective of socialist revolution against all efforts, abetted by the Stalinists, to replace the Nazis with reconstructed bourgeois states in the occupied countries. In a document entitled, "The Liquidation of the Second Imperial-

ist War and the Revolutionary Upsurge," the conference declared:

"Though the proletariat must refuse the alliance with its own bourgeoisie, it cannot be indifferent to the mass struggle against the oppression of German imperialism. The proletariat supports this struggle in order to help and speed up its transformation into a general fight against capitalism. This attitude implies the most energetic struggle against attempts by the agents of the national bourgeoisie to get hold of the masses and make use of them for rebuilding the capitalist army and state. Everything must be put to work, on the contrary, to develop the embryos of workers' power (militias, committees, etc), while the most energetic fight must be carried on against all forms of nationalism."<sup>2</sup>

The document specifically stressed the importance of attempting to make inroads into the popular Resistance movements. It stated that the Fourth International must "take into consideration this will to struggle on the part of the masses, and to try, despite the many dangers resulting from the national forms which this struggle takes on, to guide it toward class goals."<sup>3</sup>

Toward this end, the document called on the Trotskyist cadre "to make this propaganda penetrate into the ranks of the partisans, with a view to regrouping the latent revolutionary forces existing therein on a political and organizational class basis."<sup>4</sup>

Trotskyists who worked within the large Resistance movements faced not only the danger of arrest by the Gestapo. They also had to evade detection by the Stalinists, who had no qualms about collaborating with the Nazis against the Fourth International, just as the Communist Party in the United States collaborated with the FBI against the Socialist Workers Party.

Banda has chosen to "forget" about the struggle waged by the Trotskyists on the European continent. As for the work of the Fourth International in Britain during the war, he seems to recall nothing at all, except a political error by Healy in relation to the Independent Labour Party. Regardless of whether this specific allegation is true — that Healy momentarily considered joining this centrist organization —

it has no bearing whatsoever on the conduct of the Fourth International during World War II.

What Banda fails to mention is that following the long-delayed fusion of the Workers International League and the Revolutionary Socialist League — a process in which Healy, after correcting his earlier mistake, played a major role — the newly-formed Revolutionary Communist Party came under almost immediate attack from the war-time coalition government led by Winston Churchill.

At the fusion conference in March 1944, the 69 delegates adopted a resolution on “Proletarian Military Policy” which declared:

The second World War into which capitalism has plunged mankind in the course of a generation, and which has been raging for more than four years, is the inevitable outcome of the crisis of capitalist methods of production, long predicted by the revolutionary Marxists, and is a sign of the impasse out of which Capitalism cannot lead the mass of humanity.... It is the duty of revolutionary socialists to patiently explain the imperialistic policy of the ruling class and to expose its false and lying slogans of the “War against Fascism” and the “War for Democracy.”<sup>5</sup>

The growing radicalization of the British working class and the active involvement of the RCP in a wave of strikes was answered by Churchill with the arrests of four leaders of the Trotskyist party in early April 1944: Jock Haston, general secretary of the RCP, Roy Tearse, Heaton Lee, and Ann Keen. They were accused of “furthering, aiding and abetting” strikes in the Tyneside declared illegal under the 1927 Trade Disputes and Trade Unions Act. The RCP leaders were the first representatives of the British working class to be tried and convicted under this infamous law, which was passed in the aftermath of the defeated 1926 General Strike.

Lee and Tearse were sentenced to 12 months in prison. Haston was sentenced to six months. The prison terms would have been much longer had it not been for the storm of protest within the workers’ movement.

Wherever it had cadre, the Fourth International fought for its revolutionary program. In Egypt, the puppet government of King Farouk banned the Trotskyist newspaper *Al Majda*

*Al Jadida*. In Palestine, the Trotskyists published newspapers in Hebrew, Arabic and English, vehemently opposing the formation of a Zionist state while fighting for the unity of Arab-Jewish workers in the struggle against British imperialism.

In Uruguay, the government, citing the prosecution of the Trotskyists in Britain, demanded action against the militants of the Fourth International working in Montevideo. In a hysterical speech given on the floor of the Chamber of Deputies, the Minister of the Interior waved the newspaper published by the Revolutionary Workers League, *Contra la Corriente* (Against the Stream), and shouted, "These people are now amongst us. They say that this is actually an imperialist war; that the working-class must not believe in the vote; they malign parliamentarism; they say that the victories of justice must be supplanted by the social tragedy of direct revolutionary action."<sup>6</sup>

In reply to the allegation that the Trotskyists opposed the war, the Revolutionary Workers League "pled guilty," declaring in an open letter:

We characterize this war as an imperialist war — as the Minister of the Interior states — because all the countries that participate in it *except the Soviet Union*, do so for imperialist interests. This war will be really and truly for democracy only when the peoples take into their own hands the conduct of the war. Does this policy favor a Hitler victory? We defy anyone to show us one single act of ours that has favored the development of Nazisms. No one desires the defeat of Hitler as we do and since 1930 Trotskyism has been the only force that warned of the Nazi danger, while the British and Yankee capitalists supported the economic development of Nazism.<sup>7</sup>

This open letter was widely circulated and discussed throughout the workers' movement in Uruguay.

No account of the work of the Fourth International during World War II should be taken seriously if it fails to mention the heroic and inspiring activities of the Trotskyists of Ceylon and India, whose unceasing struggle against British imperialism provided a classic demonstration of revolutionary defeatism in practice.

The Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP) was formed by a group of 50 workers and students in December 1935, while Ceylon was still a British colony. Within a short period of time, the LSSP won the allegiance of nearly seven million workers and peasants. It organized the unions of railroad workers, general laborers and plantation workers. The LSSP also conducted work among the poorest sections of the peasantry. Combining electoral activity with its mass work, the LSSP won the election of N.M. Pereira and D.P.R. Goonewardene to the Ceylon State Council in its first election campaign. In 1942 the LSSP declared for affiliation to the Fourth International.

Upon the outbreak of the war between German, British and French imperialism in September 1939, Pereira and Goonewardene were arrested in violation of their parliamentary immunity. Two other leaders of the LSSP, Colvin De Silva and Edmond Sammarakkody, were arrested at the same time. The party's printing presses were seized and its publications confiscated. A terror campaign was initiated against the party by the armed Rifle Corps of the Ceylon Planters Association. This criminal persecution of the LSSP by British imperialism preceded the official illegalization of the party by British Governor-General Sir Andrew Caldecott on March 13, 1942.

In the midst of this brutal repression, the LSSP, the Revolutionary Socialist League of Bengal, and the Bolshevik-Leninist Party of the United Provinces and Bihar held a conference in March 1941. It outlined a Trotskyist program for India which was submitted for discussion. This was followed by the election in November 1941 of a Provisional Committee, which functioned as the leadership of the whole movement. The program based on extensive discussion of the draft was adopted in May 1942 and an all-India party formally launched.

In April 1942, in the midst of the preparations for the launching of the all-India party and coinciding with a great upsurge of mass struggle against British imperialism, Pereira and Goonewardene staged a daring escape from the concentration camp in which they were being held, with the help of a jailer whom they had won to Trotskyism. The jailer had



smuggled in elegant clothing for the prisoners and obtained the required duplicate keys, and at the appropriate time, Pereira and Goonewardene, along with Sammarakkody and De Silva, dressed themselves as visiting dignitaries and made a ceremonious and graceful departure from the prison. To add insult to injury, in a gesture calculated to complete the humiliation of the British imperialists, the escapees threw the jail keys back over the wall once they were outside the prison.

The British authorities, stunned by the escape of their most feared opponents, placed a price on their heads and scoured the country to find them. Finally, on July 15, 1943, as a result of the treachery of a Stalinist agent named Kulkarni who had infiltrated the Trotskyist movement in Bombay, Pereira and Goonewardene were arrested. As in the United States, Latin America and Europe, the Indian Stalinists collaborated directly with imperialist authorities in the persecution and suppression of the Trotskyist movement.

The Ceylonese leaders were incarcerated in Indian prisons for five months before being returned to Ceylon for trial. On February 8, 1944, before an imperialist court in the city of Kandy, Pereira and Goonewardene issued a statement defending the policies and program of Trotskyism:

*Why were we kept in detention? I challenge the right of Sir Andrew Caldecott, agent of the Bank of England and tool of the capitalist class in Britain, to issue a warrant for my arrest and detention. What right has the ruling class of Britain to rule over this island except superior force? Britain has as much right to rule over the people as the Nazis to rule over the people of Denmark and Norway, or the Japanese imperialists to rule over Formosa and Java. NO MORE. The British ruling class came to this island as pirates and have remained here as plunderers. The British Empire was built up by perjury by day and forgery by night.*

Ever since my return to this island in 1932, my colleagues worked with ceaseless endeavor to disseminate the idea of scientific socialism among the petty bourgeois intelligentsia and the advanced sections of the working class. The spontaneous labor movement which displayed tremendous vigor and militancy in the twenties had spent its force in

the stagnant waters of trade union politics by the early thirties. After three years of work in the propagation of Marxism, we had developed a sufficiently large nucleus, imbued with the ideas of scientific socialism, that we were in a position to launch the Lanka Sama Samaja Party, in December 1935. The history of the party is known to the people of this country. Suffice it to say that it put itself at the forefront of every struggle against imperialism and the capitalist class in this country ever since the party was founded.

The leadership of the LSSP from its very inception refused to come under the leadership of the Stalinist Communist International and remained ever loyal to the principles Lenin and Trotsky stood for in their day. In March 1940 the party, under the influence of the teachings of Trotsky, expelled the Stalinists who were trying to smuggle into the party Stalinist contraband. In 1942 the LSSP became a section of the Fourth International, founded by Trotsky and the comrades of the International Left Opposition.

When the Second Imperialist World War broke out in September, 1939, the party characterized the war as an imperialist war and took a revolutionary defeatist line. My colleagues and I continued to intensify the class struggle and the fight against British imperialism. War is the continuation of politics by other means, i.e. by more forcible means. The character of the war is determined by the class that conducts the war. The war was and remains an imperialist war for markets, for sources of raw materials, for colonies. The "democratic" powers and the Axis powers are fighting to determine which group shall dominate the world. Democracy and Fascism are but two sides of the same coin. Over-ripe and decadent capitalism develops into Fascism when the working class fails to overthrow capitalism and set up its own form of government — the dictatorship of the proletariat.

*The Party refused to change its characterization of the war on the entry of the Soviet Union into the war. It was quick, however, in defining the war as an imperialist war on the part of every country involved in it except the Soviet Union and China. The Soviet Union is a workers' state, though deformed. Thus the Soviet Union is fighting a progressive war in defense of the gains of the October Revolution. The Party supports the Soviet Union in this war*

*and is doing everything in its power to enable the working class to render every independent assistance to the Soviet Union in this war. It stands for military victory against the counter-revolutionary forces of Hitler's Europe.*

*We support the war of the Chinese workers and peasants for national liberation from the yoke of Japanese Imperialism. But the party works for the defeat of British imperialism in this war by the forces of the colonial masses and the working class of Britain.*

*The war has set in motion social and political forces that the ruling classes of the warring imperialist powers never bargained for. Fascism is already tottering in Europe, thanks to the hammer blows of the Red Army. But Fascism is taking shape in Great Britain and America.*

*The fate of the Empire of the Mikado is sealed. The paper houses of the Mikado will go up in flames. But the working class in Japan is likely to settle accounts with the landlords and the capitalists of the Rising Sun — not the armed forces of America and the British Empire. Before this war is over civil war will spread over Europe and Asia. The Soviet Union will play a dominant part in the shaping of the world in the coming years.*

*Revolutions are on the order of the day. There is no room to believe that the European working class has not benefited from its experiences since the October Revolution in 1917. In the wake of the fall of Fascism working class revolutions will break out in Europe. The fall of Japanese imperialism will give rise to colonial revolution. Lenin characterized this epoch as the epoch of wars and revolutions.*

*I escaped from prison in April, 1942, for the purpose of helping the tiny group of Fourth Internationalists in India to build a party of the working class that can take advantage of the crises in Indian society that are breaking out in rapid succession. My colleagues and I timed our escape to be in India at one of the most important crises in her history. We are glad that we were able to play an infinitesimally small part, no doubt, in the movement that took place in India from August 1942.*

*We were arrested on the 15th of July, 1943. After spending five long months in the jails of British Imperialism in India, we are back in the dungeons of British imperialism in Ceylon. Time is with us. IMPERIALISM IS DOOMED, THE FUTURE IS WITH THE WORKING CLASS. The working*

*class of Ceylon under the leadership of the Sama Samaja Party will play its part in the coming years.*<sup>8</sup>

There is good reason to believe that this statement by Goonewardene and Pereira contributed to the political education of two young brothers from Kandy — Michael and Anthony Van Der Poorten — and inspired them to break with their bourgeois upbringing and to dedicate themselves as Trotskyists to the struggle for socialist revolution. And yet this glorious chapter in the development of the Fourth International during World War II is not even mentioned by Banda, the name used Michael Van Der Poorten during his four decades inside the Trotskyist movement. In attempting to destroy the Fourth International, he is forced to kill that which was best within himself.

The subsequent capitulation of the LSSP after 1953 can no more detract from its great achievements in the early years of its existence than the degeneration of Banda can nullify the significance of the contributions he once made. Rather, when compared to the promise of the early years, the historical magnitude of the betrayal is shown in all its enormity.

# 8

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## The "Three Theses" of the Retrogressionists

In Banda's treatment of the war years, he uses phrases such as "in Europe sections abstained from participating in the Resistance," which are calculated to provoke a contemptuous attitude toward the Fourth International among those who have not had the opportunity to study its history.

The Fourth International's refusal to subordinate the political independence of the proletariat to the program of "democratic" imperialism, and its determination to work out a principled line toward the Resistance movements are transformed by Banda into a lying allegation: the Trotskyists, political cowards as always, "abstained"! Another reason for burying the International Committee! Down with Trotskyism!

Not surprisingly, Banda shows no interest in tracing the historical origins of the dispute over the attitude of the Fourth International toward the World War II Resistance movements. He does not care to examine who it was who raised similar criticisms of the Trotskyist movement during the 1940s or study the political positions with which such criticisms were linked.

Rather, in passing, Banda refers to Cannon's struggle against the Goldman-Morrow faction as "an alibi and convenient diversion which did nothing to stop the descent into pragmatism of the worst kind." Like a pickpocket anxious to get away from the scene of the crime, Banda immediately moves on. Why the haste? From this offhand

remark, it might be assumed that he is dealing with a minor episode which was of no particular importance in the history of the Fourth International.

But that is hardly the case. The struggle led by Cannon against Felix Morrow and Albert Goldman represented the continuation and deepening of the battle waged by the SWP in 1939-40, under the leadership of Leon Trotsky, against the petty-bourgeois opposition of Shachtman, Burnham and Abern. The fight against the Morrow-Goldman minority faction eventually assumed the form of an international struggle against petty-bourgeois and right-wing elements throughout the Fourth International.

The fact that Banda glosses over this struggle and treats it as simply "an alibi and convenient diversion" is significant in two respects.

First, it demonstrates again that Banda's conception of the history of the Fourth International and its inner-party struggle is entirely subjective. He is incapable of uncovering the objective connection between the struggle of tendencies within the Trotskyist movement and the development of the world capitalist crisis and the class struggle. Rather than examining the political biographies of leaders within the Fourth International as a contradictory reflection of objectively existing social relations, Banda sees them only as the good, the bad and the ugly.

Second, an analysis of the issues which arose in the course of the struggle against Morrow, Goldman and their international retinue exposes the reactionary political and theoretical ancestry of the charges which Banda now levels against the Fourth International. As we have previously pointed out, he is an eclectic who employs bits and pieces of old revisionist arguments which were answered long ago to the satisfaction of all Trotskyists except, as it now turns out, Michael Banda.

Not only the criticism of the Fourth International's attitude toward the official Resistance movements, but also Banda's charge that "the entire FI — bereft of Trotsky's dialectical ability and vision — was completely confused by the post-war situation because the leading Trotskyists, such as Cannon, had made a fetishistic dogma out of Trotskyism" repeats the allegations of Felix Morrow.

This is how Felix Morrow explained the source of what he considered, in 1946, the terminal crisis of the Fourth International:

This mad clinging to outworn formulas — that is the source of all the disputes between us. What Comrade Cannon calls our "unchanging program." There is the heart of the dispute. For Cannon and his followers the program must not have rude hands laid upon it; it is sacred, inviolable....

Central to our understanding of the dispute is to understand the situation created by the death of Trotsky. The death of Trotsky was bound, sooner or later, to lead to a political crisis of the Fourth International, and that is what we are confronted with — a political crisis on an international scale. It was bound to happen because Trotsky's death created a gap which nobody could fill either individually or collectively.<sup>1</sup>

Morrow's denunciation of Cannon's "unchanging program" — or what Banda calls making "a fetishistic dogma out of Trotskyism" — was an attempt to overthrow the program of the Fourth International. The similarity between the two approaches is neither superficial nor accidental. The theoretical garb of the petty-bourgeois opponents of the Fourth International consists, from generation to generation, of the same old hand-me-downs. Nevertheless, each new generation of revisionists — from Shachtman in 1940 all the way to Banda in 1986 — flatter themselves to have discovered anew the fatal flaw of Trotskyism.

Let us review the origins of the struggle against the Morrow-Goldman faction and their supporters in the Fourth International, which included, incidentally, both Banda's beloved Grandizo Munis and Jock Haston of the Revolutionary Communist Party, as the British section was then known.

The struggle waged by Trotsky and the SWP against Burnham, Shachtman and Abern was a political milestone in the transformation of the Socialist Workers Party into a Marxist proletarian party. It marked a decisive break by the SWP with petty-bourgeois propagandists who were alien to the workers' movement and who succumbed to the class pressures exerted by imperialism upon the revolutionary vanguard on the eve of America's entry into World War II.

James Burnham, the ideological leader of the minority, declared his opposition to dialectical materialism and deserted to the camp of democratic imperialist reaction little more than one month after the split in April 1940. Shachtman's group, which called itself the Workers Party, still claimed to be Trotskyist while rejecting the Fourth International's characterization of the Soviet Union as a workers' state and refusing to defend it unconditionally against imperialist attacks.

Underlying the renegacy of Shachtman was the skepticism of a broad layer of petty-bourgeois intellectuals who, beneath the impact of proletarian defeats, the apparent strength of the Soviet bureaucracy, and the specter of war, lost all confidence in the perspective of socialist revolution. As Trotsky explained:

All the various types of disillusioned and frightened representatives of pseudo-Marxism proceed ... from the assumption that the bankruptcy of the leadership only "reflects" the incapacity of the proletariat to fulfill its revolutionary mission. Not all our opponents express this thought clearly, but all of them — ultra-lefts, centrists, anarchists, not to mention Stalinists and social-democrats — shift the responsibility for the defeats from themselves to the shoulders of the proletariat. None of them indicate under precisely what conditions the proletariat will be capable of accomplishing the socialist overturn.<sup>2</sup>

Though the split with Shachtman was decisive from the standpoint of politics, theory and organization, this did not mean that the social pressures that had produced Shachtman's degeneration and betrayal had abated, nor that the Fourth International had made a clean break with all the petty-bourgeois elements within its ranks. As long as capitalism exists, and even in the immediate aftermath of the socialist revolution, there will be no "final struggle" against revisionism. The outbreak of the war, its devastating impact and unforeseeable consequences produced new differentiations within the Fourth International.

The earliest intimations of new revisionist tendencies within the Fourth International came in 1942 with the publication of a document by German emigré Trotskyists



entitled, "Three Theses on the Political Situation and the Political Tasks." The position advanced in this document recalled Trotsky's 1939 warning that petty-bourgeois skepticism leads inevitably to a political deadend: "If we grant as true that the cause of the defeats is rooted in the social qualities of the proletariat itself then the position of modern society will have to be acknowledged as hopeless."<sup>3</sup>

This was, more or less, the position at which the authors of the "Three Theses" arrived with their theory of "retrogression." Convinced that the defeat of the German working class and the conquest of Europe by the Nazis was irrevocable, the "retrogressionists" of the IKD (International Communists of Germany) concluded that the perspective of socialism had been removed from the agenda of history for the foreseeable future. The war, they believed, would rage on for decades. Their pessimism assumed apocalyptic dimensions. "Wherever one looks," they wrote, "there are destruction, gangrene and anarchy in alarming degree which seal the catastrophe of culture."<sup>4</sup>

Hitlerism was not the product of rotting capitalism, but the birthmark of a new social system: "The prisons, the new ghettos, the forced labor, the concentration and even war-prisoners' camps are not only transitional political-military establishments, they are just as much forms of *new economic exploitation which accompanies the development toward a modern slave state* and is intended as the *permanent fate of a considerable percentage of mankind*."<sup>5</sup>

The old conceptions of the class struggle had been rendered invalid. "The political situation ... is characterized above all by the destruction of workers' and non-fascist bourgeois parties ... With certain exceptions, there is no longer an independent traditional bourgeois or proletarian political or workers' movement ... even the 'national' bourgeoisie is being more and more crushed ... Under such circumstances protests against growing suffering must find *another outlet*."<sup>6</sup>

The new movement would consist of "all classes and strata," combined in a united struggle for the "national liberation" of Europe. All talk of overthrowing capitalism was irrelevant: "The transition from fascism to Socialism

remains a utopia without an intermediate stage, which is basically equivalent to a democratic revolution."<sup>7</sup>

By the end of 1942, the defeat of Hitler at Stalingrad — which marked the beginning of the end of German fascism — shattered the central tenet of the "Three Theses," the perspective of the interminable war and the protracted domination of German imperialism. But rather than abandon their old theory, the retrogressionists simply revised it to make it even more all-embracing and still more categorical in its rejection of the perspective of social revolution.

In a new document, entitled "Capitalist Barbarism or Socialism" which appeared in 1944, they claimed, "The development toward the modern slave state is a *world phenomenon* which arises out of capitalist putrefaction."<sup>8</sup>

The historical development of mankind, they argued, had been thrown back generations, if not centuries, placing before the working class the task of reconquering national freedom as the precondition for socialist development. Retrogressive development

is a process that appears before us as the horrible battle for self-preservation of a society doomed to death, and harks back in reverse order to the end of the Middle Ages, the epoch of "primitive accumulation," the Thirty Years War, the bourgeois revolutions, etc. In those days it was a question of smashing an outlived economic form and of winning the independence of nations — now it is a question of abolishing independence and of shoving society back to the barbarism of the Middle Ages ...

Socialism ... is sucked into the past.... The proletariat has again, as formerly, become an amorphous mass, the characteristics of its rise and its formation have been lost.<sup>9</sup>

The historical content of retrogression was summed up in the formula, "*out of slavery, bondage, lack of national independence, industrial dependency and backwardness, into industrial backwardness and dependency, lack of national independence, bondage and slavery.*"<sup>10</sup>

So as to allow no room for any false optimism, the IKD theoreticians proudly proclaimed that "we have fixed the beginning of the retrogressive movement quite concretely in the *Russia of the victorious October revolution*. Hence, we have incorporated the victorious October revolution in the

retrogression, considering it in its inner contradiction as an *isolated* revolution in its counter-revolutionary transformation."<sup>11</sup>

In place of German fascism, the retrogressionists ascribed to the United States the role of proprietor of the universal "slave state." The fundamental conflict in society was now the struggle of nations to achieve their independence.

Before Europe can unite itself into "socialist states," it must first separate itself again into independent and autonomous states. It is entirely a matter of the split-up, enslaved, hurled-back peoples and the proletariat constituting themselves again as a nation....

The most pressing political problem is the century-old problem of the springtime of industrial capitalism and of scientific socialism — *conquest of political freedom, establishment of democracy* (also for Russia) *as the indispensable precondition for national liberation and the founding of the labor movement.*<sup>12</sup>

Socialists had to recognize that the

retrogressive movement has on a large scale compressed all the problems posed in the rising development of *the whole of bourgeois history and its pre-history....* And the retrogressively provided, indispensable formal means for the solution of the *world crisis* of capitalism and socialism — the means for which the revolutionists need only stretch out their hands — is called: *national freedom*. By this, we mean to say: the national question is one of those historic episodes which *necessarily* become the strategic transition point for the reconstitution of the labor movement and the socialist revolution. Whoever does not understand this historically necessary episode and does not know how to use it, knows and understands *nothing* of Marxism-Leninism.<sup>13</sup>

By way of their tortured perspective, the retrogressionists arrived at the negation of the fundamental Marxist conception of the political independence of the working class and a new justification for class collaborationist "People's Frontism." In the context of the situation prevailing in Europe in 1942-45, this meant the complete subordination of the workers' movement to the bourgeois-led Resistance organizations: " 'Revolutionists have the choice either to give

*unconditional support* to these movements or to withdraw altogether from politics.'<sup>14</sup>

The retrogressionists of the IKD insisted that the sole viable perspective was that a new epoch of democratic national revolutions had arisen, in which the working class could do no more than tail behind the leadership of the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois Resistance leaders: "There is good ground for the fact, and it should stimulate reflection, that neither in *Capitalist Barbarism* nor in the *Three Theses* or anywhere else did we occupy ourselves with 'proletarian' revolutionary prospects. Except for scorn and contempt, not a single word will be found in our writings about this revolution-rubbish of the Fourth [International]."<sup>15</sup>

From almost the moment it saw the light, the perspective of the retrogressionists was opposed and condemned by the Socialist Workers Party. In 1942 the SWP warned in a party resolution:

Official patriotism serves simply as a mask to conceal the class interests of the exploiters. The subsequent capitulations of the French bourgeoisie to Hitler have proved this to the hilt.

The aspiration of the masses of France and the other occupied countries for national liberation has profound revolutionary implications. But, like the sentiment of anti-fascism, it can be perverted to the uses of imperialism. Such a perversion of the movement is inevitable if it proceeds under the slogans and leadership of bourgeois nationalism. The "democratic" imperialist gangsters are interested only in recovering the property which has been taken away from them by the fascist gangsters.

This is what they mean by national liberation. The interests of the masses are profoundly different. The tasks of the workers of the occupied countries is to put themselves at the head of the insurgent movement and direct it toward the struggle for the socialist reorganization of Europe. Their allies in this struggle are not the Anglo-American imperialists and their satellites among the native bourgeoisie, but the workers of Germany ... The central unifying slogan of the revolutionary fight is the "Socialist United States of Europe" and to it all other slogans must be subordinated.<sup>16</sup>

The scope and implications of the dispute widened. The outlook of the IKD retrogressionists was embraced by none other than Shachtman and his Workers Party, who had also condemned as a form of "social chauvinism" the SWP's military policy. It denounced the SWP's slogan of the Socialist United States of Europe as "the sheerest kind of abstractionism and dogmatism ... Before the masses can see the 'Socialist United States of Europe' as a realistic slogan, they undoubtedly want to have at their disposal *independent* national states."<sup>17</sup>

Predictably, Shachtman's impressionism produced the most bizarre political results. In Asia, where genuine democratic tasks remained to be solved, the Workers Party opposed the national struggle waged by the Chinese people against Japanese imperialism on the grounds that no support whatever could be given to the bourgeois nationalist Chiang Kai-shek. But in Europe, where the democratic revolution had been concluded long before, Shachtman insisted that the proletariat be subordinated to the reactionary national bourgeoisie of the occupied countries.

Shachtman, naturally, denounced the refusal of the Trotskyists to totally bury themselves within the official Resistance movements and adapt themselves to their bourgeois programs: "The sections of the Fourth International ... proved to be politically sterile ... [because they] failed to become the most ardent and consistent champions of national liberation, of the central aim of these revolutionary democratic movements.'"<sup>18</sup> In its analysis of Shachtman's position, the SWP made clear that the real issue was not whether or not Trotskyists should participate in the Resistance struggles against the Nazis.

Revolutionists participate in every movement, when it assumes a mass character, but they do so with their own revolutionary program and methods. The Workers Party resolution, however, called for *political solidarity* with these People's Fronts; for participation in the People's Front movements, *as a People's Fronter*. The IKD mentors of the Workers Party had written that these movements must be "unconditionally supported." And this is the nub of the difference between ourselves and the Shachtmanites.<sup>19</sup>

Trotsky had warned only a few years before that the outcome of impressionism is the disintegration of theoretical thought, and this was concretely exemplified in the IKD documents. Its authors had been swept off their feet and turned upside down on their heads under the impact of great historical events.

Despite the almost impenetrable complexity of their prose and the pompous display of erudition, the theoretical formulations of the IKD were, in essence, nothing more than subjective constructions whose historical projections proceeded directly from one-sided impressions of the surface appearance of political developments. Inevitably, the class content of their impressionist method revealed itself in political conclusions that advocated capitulation to bourgeois democracy and thereby assisted the betrayals of the Stalinists and social democrats.

As is invariably the case with impressionists, they were blind to the actual unfolding of the historical process which they claimed to be explaining. From 1943 on, the proletariat was on the move throughout the continent.

Inspired by the awesome social force unleashed against the Nazis by the Soviet Union, the working class launched a mighty offensive against German imperialism and its bourgeois allies. Especially in France, Italy and Greece, the armed masses had the opportunity and sought to take the power. These struggles were betrayed by the Stalinists, who, based on the agreements between the Soviet bureaucracy and Anglo-American imperialism, accepted the maintenance of capitalist rule in Greece and Western Europe.

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## The Morrow- Goldman Faction

The political differences with the IKD, whose perspective was endorsed by the Shachtmanites, found its reflection within the Fourth International and the Socialist Workers Party, with the emergence of a tendency led by Felix Morrow and Albert Goldman. The "Three Theses" of the IKD was only the most explicit articulation of a perspective that reflected a movement by broad sections of the middle class toward the anti-communist camp of "democratic" imperialism.

Morrow and Goldman had played prominent roles within the Trotskyist movement since the 1930s. Goldman was a socialist attorney whose most outstanding contributions to the party had been made during the Dewey Commission proceedings of 1937 in Coyoacan, Mexico, where he assisted Leon Trotsky, and as the SWP's chief defense counsel during the Minneapolis frame-up trial, at which he was also a codefendant. A gifted speaker and a talented propagandist, his political sympathies were generally with the right-wing of the movement. In his opposition to the SWP leadership, he tended to place the greatest emphasis on the "organizational" question — the hallmark of petty-bourgeois elements.

Morrow was a more substantial figure than Goldman, and his authority in the movement was based on his brilliant journalistic gifts which found their outstanding expression in his analysis of the Spanish Revolution, *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Spain* — though it must be said, for the historical record, that the writing of this book was a

collective effort in which a number of party leaders played an important role. But for all his talents, Morrow's political makeup exhibited many of the characteristics of the New York petty-bourgeois intellectual, quite similar in many ways to Max Shachtman. It was well known that Morrow rejected dialectical materialism, and it came as a surprise to many that he supported the Cannon majority in the 1939-40 struggle.

Although Morrow remained loyal to the Fourth International in 1940, his approach to the struggle against the petty-bourgeois minority, reflecting his own false theoretical position, focused simply on the central political issue in the dispute: the vexatious "Russian question." From his standpoint, the central figure in the petty-bourgeois minority was Shachtman. For Trotsky, the principal representative of the opposition was James Burnham, the philosophical leader of the anti-Marxist bloc.

The implications of Morrow's rejection of the dialectic and the unreliability of political agreement based solely on "concrete questions" emerged as early as 1943, when he began to drift back to the positions of Shachtman. An important aspect of this process of degeneration was reflected in his political relations with Jean Van Heijenoort, the former secretary of Leon Trotsky, who was living in New York during World War II and was responsible for the maintenance of communications with the European sections.

An odious and cynical subjectivist — whom Trotsky had dismissed from his household in November 1939 — Van Heijenoort had pronounced differences with dialectical materialism, rejecting its validity as the science of the most general laws of all motion. He argued against the existence of dialectical processes in nature, claiming:

All the themes of dialectic have a great value in the epistemological field, but become empty abstractions outside....

the general conclusion is: materialist dialectic belongs to the field of epistemology. It deals with the development of knowledge. In this field it brings extremely valuable contributions. But when transferred into the external world, it can only formulate extremely vague abstractions which, as a duplicate or substitute for precise scientific



laws, have neither value nor use. And in attempting this transfer, one always risks falling into the old trap of metaphysics.<sup>1</sup>

Even before major and irreconcilable political differences were to emerge, the SWP mounted a theoretical offensive, led by John G. Wright and George Novack, against Van Heijenoort's attack on the dialectic, demonstrating that it had taken to heart the lessons of Trotsky's struggle against the pragmatism of Burnham and contradicting Banda's wild and ignorant claim, "Dialectics had long since ceased to inspire the FI. Vulgar empiricism had taken its place."

Referring to the above-quoted statement by Van Heijenoort (who wrote under the name Marc Loris), Wright argued:

If these words mean anything at all they mean that no physicist, no chemist, no biologist, no psychologist, no sociologist could have any possible need or use for "all the themes of the dialectic." Epistemologists alone are exempt. But why? It remains a mystery what earthly use any epistemologist could have for a theory of knowledge that cannot be transferred to other fields of science. We await an explanation why any rational being should bother at all with a "development of knowledge" that evaporates into thin air (or in Loris' words, turns into "extremely vague — and valueless and useless — abstraction") the moment it is applied to "the external world." (Included in this last sweeping phrase, by the way, are not only the heavens and the earth but society as well.) ...

Comrade Loris is surely acquainted with the ideas of a whole school of renegade radicals headed by the notorious Hook, who tried to "restrict" the dialectic to the sphere of sociology. They pretended that they were thereby purging Marxism of heresies by Engels, vestiges of Hegelianism, and so forth and so on. It remains inexplicable why anyone in our movement should seek to compete with these gentlemen in "restricting" the dialectic still further.

All our great teachers, instead of pigeonholing the dialectic into any single field whether that of sociology or epistemology, taught us that it applied to the processes in the whole external world, including man and mind. Far from conceiving that the dialectic becomes dissolved into empty abstractions from contact with objective reality, our great teachers stressed, on the contrary, the urgency and

fruitfulness of such a "transference." And moreover they taught us that it was Nature itself (the "external world") that implanted the dialectic in the human mind.<sup>2</sup>

The political ramifications of Van Heijenoort's hostility to the dialectic were soon revealed. In the speed of his movement to the right, he outstripped even Morrow and Goldman. Eventually, they all wound up in the same place: in the camp of US imperialism, thus vindicating once again Trotsky's warning to Burnham: "Anyone acquainted with the history of the struggles of tendencies within the workers' parties knows that desertions to the camp of opportunism and even to the camp of bourgeois reaction began not infrequently with rejection of the dialectic."<sup>3</sup>

Initially, the differences raised by Morrow appeared to be over the tempo of revolutionary developments in Europe. Earlier, before going to prison as one of the SWP 18, he had opposed the "Three Theses" of the IKD and urged the German group to think out its position "to its ultimate conclusion." When Mussolini was overthrown in 1943, Morrow hailed this event as the harbinger of the socialist revolution that Trotsky had foreseen. Yet, when the further progress of the revolution was forestalled through the betrayals of the Stalinists and the intervention of the allied imperialist forces with whom they collaborated, Morrow almost immediately fell back to the most pessimistic conclusions.

The characteristic of a Marxist revolutionist is that he is the *last* to leave the field of battle. As late as 1907, long after the Mensheviks and the liberals had proclaimed the proletariat defeated, Lenin was still trying to ignite the remaining embers of the 1905 Revolution. Morrow, on the other hand, became convinced by 1944 that the prospects for a revolutionary conclusion of the war in western Europe were non-existent and that agitation on the basis of revolutionary socialist slogans drawn from the *Transitional Program* should be prohibited within the sections of the Fourth International. Instead, all activity of the European sections, he argued, ought to be concentrated on democratic slogans. Even the call for the "United Socialist States of Europe" had to be shelved.

Morrow initially objected to certain ultraleft formulations which appeared in the documents of the European Trots-

kyists, and, indeed, some of his earlier criticisms were not unfounded. He claimed that his contributions were aimed at developing a better understanding of the tempo of events.

But as the discussion developed, it became clear that Morrow was rapidly moving to the right and his obsessive preoccupation with democratic demands was becoming transformed into an open repudiation of the whole perspective of socialist revolution. He called for the liquidation of the European sections of the FI into the existing social democratic parties, and even urged the French Trotskyists to accommodate themselves to Andre Malraux, who was functioning as a henchman of De Gaulle. Delighting in each indication that bourgeois rule was being stabilized and that the Stalinists and social democrats were bringing the mass movement under control, all of his advice was based on the conviction that there existed no prospect for socialist revolution.

The subjective idealist foundations of Morrow's perspective were established in the following declaration:

The absence of the revolutionary party — and it is absent — changes the whole situation. Instead of saying, "Only the revolutionary party is lacking," we must instead say, at least to ourselves, "The absence of the revolutionary party transforms the conditions which otherwise would be revolutionary into conditions in which one must fight, so far as agitation is concerned, for the most elementary demands."<sup>4</sup>

The European Secretariat of the Fourth International replied emphatically, "Objectively revolutionary situations have existed, do exist and will continue to exist independently of whether a revolutionary party is present on the scene or not."<sup>5</sup>

Morrow's perspective had a form of opportunism which was to emerge again and again inside the Fourth International. Proceeding from an impressionistic assessment of the immediate political conjuncture, Morrow worked out a political line which promised to make the Trotskyist movement more accessible to the masses, but in reality threatened the dissolution of its historically-developed revolutionary program. Even if one were to concede that petty-bourgeois democratic sentiments dominated the consciousness of the

proletariat, it was a betrayal of Marxism to conclude that such a situation called for the ditching of revolutionary socialist slogans in favor of more "popular" democratic ones. Marxists do not seek to find away out of "political isolation" by transforming their proletarian socialist party into a petty-bourgeois democratic one. Rather, like Lenin and Trotsky in 1917, they fight against the prevailing moods and seek to educate the working class and raise the level of its political consciousness.

Morrow spoke for all the skeptics who felt that they had been "betrayed" by Trotsky: he had "promised" them that World War II would end with socialist revolution in Western Europe and the overthrow of Stalinism in the USSR. In fact, Trotsky had promised them nothing. As he had explained shortly before his death:

Every historical prognosis is always conditional, and the more concrete the prognosis, the more conditional it is. A prognosis is not a promissory note which can be cashed on a given date. Prognosis outlines only the definite trends of the development. But along with these trends a different order of forces and tendencies operate, which at a certain moment begin to predominate. All those who seek exact predictions of concrete events should consult the astrologists. Marxist prognosis aids only in orientation.<sup>6</sup>

The European Secretariat, then led by Pablo, fought back against Morrow and his supporters, insisting that despite all the unforeseen and unforeseeable developments which followed Trotsky's death, his vision of the revolutionary implications of the imperialist war had been vindicated on a world scale, with mass revolutionary struggles in Yugoslavia and throughout Asia.

Only the superficial and cowardly petty-bourgeois mind can see a refutation of our revolutionary perspective in these facts: that war did not, either during its course or immediately thereafter, bring about the revolution in Europe; that the German revolution has not taken place; that the traditional organizations, and foremost among them, the Stalinist parties, have experienced a new and powerful rise. While recognizing that all these facts represent so many defeats for the revolutionary proletariat, the IVth International cannot for one moment forget that

the mortal crisis of capitalism, the destruction of its equilibrium, the sharpening of all its fundamental contradictions, constitute far more important facts, and upon them rest our revolutionary perspective and our vastly increased opportunities for building the Revolutionary Party....

*What confronts us now is a world-wide crisis transcending anything known in the past, and a world-wide revolutionary upsurge, it is true, developing at unequal tempos in different parts of the world, but unceasingly exercising reciprocal influences from one center to another, and thus determining a long revolutionary perspective.<sup>7</sup>*

From the time of their release from prison, the right-wing evolution of Goldman and Morrow was bound up with their demand that the SWP reunify with Shachtman's Workers Party. This demonstrated that Morrow and Goldman were breaking with the one fundamental question of principle upon which they had opposed Shachtman in 1939-40, the defense of the USSR. However, they claimed that the differences between the SWP and the Workers Party were exaggerated and did not justify the existence of two separate organizations. In reply, the SWP produced an exhaustive analysis of the irreconcilable differences between Trotskyists and Shachtmanites, entitled, "Revolutionary Marxism or Petty-Bourgeois Revisionism?" The SWP laid down the

following rock-bottom programmatic criteria operating today to demarcate the revolutionary tendency from all forms and varieties of opportunism:

1. Evaluation of the Soviet Union and the attitude toward its defense. (Rejection of all theories of a new bureaucratic class and all derivatives of this theory.)

And, the corollary of this point: Evaluation of the Stalinist parties in the capitalist countries and the attitude toward these parties. (Rejection of all theories that deny the working class character of these parties.)

2. Evaluation of the character of the epoch, attitude toward the European revolution and the tasks of the vanguard. (Rejection of all varieties of revisionism in the form of "retrogressionist" theories, conclusions or derivatives.)

3. Attitude toward the Bolshevik conception of the party. (Rejection of all Menshevik conceptions of "all-inclusive" parties or Internationals.)<sup>8</sup>

Tracing the evolution of the Workers Party since the 1940 split, the SWP concluded that the

Workers Party has *consistently* broken with the *essentials* of our program, has *consistently* developed an opportunist position on the major political questions, has continued to wage unremitting warfare against our organization, our concepts, our methods, our leadership. On the three basic international criteria which delineate the Marxist current from the opportunist, the Shachtmanites have established themselves as the consistent and front-line champions of opportunism and revisionism.

The *tendency* represented by Shachtman and Co. can thus be established with scientific precision on the basis of this study. The Workers Party is a petty-bourgeois, centrist, ingrown sect, moving ever more swiftly *away from* Marxism *toward* left Social Democracy.<sup>9</sup>

This evaluation of Shachtmanism, which, if anything, was shown by history to be overly generous, sharpened the political struggle against the Goldman-Morrow tendency. The class character of this group and its international supporters as a petty-bourgeois tendency capitulating to the pressure of imperialist democracy was exposed on two questions.

The first was the question of the 1946 French referendum on the proposed bourgeois constitution of the Fourth Republic. Banda makes a special reference to this issue: "The failure of the IS (International Secretariat) and IEC (International Executive Committee) to address themselves to the major events of this post-war period was complemented by the most shameless toadying to the bourgeois democracy in Western Europe, e.g. Mandel's support for the 1946 Referendum in France...."

As usual, Banda is wrong. In fact, the IEC and the IS majority (with the support of the SWP leadership) *opposed* the referendum and Ernest Mandel wrote some of the major resolutions condemning the opportunist support for a yes vote given by the majority of the French PCI leadership.

At a plenary session of the IEC in June 1946, the IEC and IS majority explained its position:

The referendum of May 5 did not imply a forced choice

of the bourgeois state. It was not a question of choosing between a bourgeois monarchy and a bourgeois republic; or between a parliament of two houses and a single assembly. The referendum of May 5 consisted simply in acceptance or refusal of a bourgeois constitution.

The revolutionary party utilizes the period of agitation around the constitutional question in order to put forward democratic and transitional demands, and supports the most democratic provisions against more reactionary proposals. But this does not imply acceptance ever of an entire bourgeois constitution, no matter how democratic it may be. In the case in question, there was not a choice among various constitutional provisions but merely one of rejecting or accepting the constitution as a whole.

To vote "Yes" meant, whether one wanted to or not, to sanction the bourgeois state, capitalist property, national defense and colonial oppression. It is not a matter of tactics but a matter of principle to remain under all circumstances hostile to a bourgeois constitution, whatever it may be. No tactical reason could justify abandonment of this principled position with regard to the bourgeois state.<sup>10</sup>

So much for the "shameful toadying to bourgeois democracy"! The position denounced by Banda was actually held by the opponents of the SWP and Mandel in the leadership of the French PCI which, under the influence of Morrow, called for a yes vote, on the opportunist grounds that the most powerful sections of the French bourgeoisie opposed the constitution, that the fight for its victory was a form of the class struggle, and that a democratic constitution was about the best the proletariat could hope for under the existing circumstances.

By 1946 Morrow had repudiated his previous criticisms of the German IKD, embraced their views on the "national question" and, in a speech delivered at the May 1946 plenum of the SWP, enthusiastically endorsed the referendum (as did Jock Haston, the leader of the Revolutionary Communist Party in Britain, one of Morrow's principal international allies).

Morrow went so far as to state that if he were in France, he would split the party over the question of the referendum, prompting Cannon to reply, "Lenin would split for the sake of the revolution. Morrow and Goldman and Company would

split for the constitution that would protect bourgeois property. This is an absolute betrayal of Marxism in the first place and a very poor issue for splitting in the second place."<sup>11</sup>

The second question was the defense of the USSR. Morrow proclaimed at that same plenum that the Fourth International must "recognize that all the reasons we gave for defending the Soviet Union have disappeared."<sup>12</sup>

Morrow's performance at the plenum brought the inner-party struggle almost to its conclusion. Goldman was about to resign from the SWP to rejoin Shachtman. Morrow lingered a few months more before being expelled at the SWP Convention at the end of the year. But at the plenum, Morrow made it clear that there was nothing in the program and perspective with which he still agreed. Cannon, he announced, "used to scare me" but now he was no longer frightened and was not scared of facing up to the political failures of the Fourth International: "The Italian experience showed what had happened to our 1940 prognosis of a wave of proletarian revolution in the course of the war. Instead of the masses overthrowing fascism as we had expected, fascism was being overthrown by its imperialist opponents, not only in Italy but in Germany and occupied Europe as well."<sup>13</sup>

Morrow conveniently ignored the not inconsiderable role played by the Red Army in smashing fascism — an oversight facilitated by his Stalinophobic view that the Soviet troops were nothing more than the spearhead of counter revolution. In his speech replying to Morrow at the SWP plenum, Cannon declared:

Now we can quit fighting about trivials and incidentals. (We can get down to the basic questions) upon which the existence of our movement depends. Listen to this. The perspective was false not only in Europe, and in Russia. The analysis was false.... The perspective and the analysis was common to all of us and its chief author, as you know, was Trotsky. And if the fundamental analysis of the epoch and the perspectives derived from it were false, then Trotskyism is no good and something different, a substitute for it, must be found. Isn't that the conclusion?

The whole analysis was wrong. The perspective was wrong. The whole movement shared it, the movement



educated and trained by Trotsky. Trotsky was the author of it and that is what he [Morrow] should say — that Trotskyism has failed the historical test. And that is what he would say if he were not scared. He is getting rid of his fears and phobias in stages — first the fear of Cannon and after that comes Trotsky. All opportunists go in stages and that is next. You will get rid of the phobia of Trotskyism in the not-too-distant future.<sup>14</sup>

Cannon never had the opportunity to meet Michael Banda, but he would not have needed to read more than a few sentences of his “27 Reasons” to immediately recognize him as a member of the same political species as Felix Morrow. No wonder Banda would like to dismiss the struggle against the Goldman-Morrow tendency as merely an “alibi” and “diversion.”

One final point should be made on the fight against Goldman and Morrow. Banda is reluctant to discuss the implications of the struggle within the SWP for the development of the Trotskyist movement in Britain. He deftly avoids this question by claiming that “the British section played little or no role — merely echoing Cannon’s pragmatism in the case of Healy or swinging wildly between Trotskyism and state capitalism (in the case of Haston, Grant and Cliff).”

As a matter of fact, the British section played a major role in the internal struggle within the SWP. The majority of the RCP, led by Jock Haston, intervened repeatedly in support of Morrow and Goldman and functioned as their chief spokesman in Europe. While denouncing Mandel for a position that he did not hold, Banda hardly touches on the political line of Haston, whose unvarnished opportunism was graphically exposed in the debate over the referendum.

Haston introduced a resolution on the IEC which declared that the struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat and opposition to bourgeois state rule was merely a “general principle” which could be modified according to the “flow of class forces.” In the case of the constitution, Haston argued that the defense of capitalist property was only the form of the conflict. The real content, he claimed, “was a showdown between the bourgeois reaction and the workers’ parties.”

Here we have an illustration of the pragmatic method which Haston glorified when he declared in a reply to the leader of the RCP minority, "It is precisely in the field of tactics that *empirical adaptation* is necessary. When Comrade Healy learns this he will raise his stature as a Marxist." <sup>15</sup>

When Haston was hammered for this statement, it was not because he had been quoted out of context. His subordination of "general principles" to the "flow of class forces" — the method of "empirical adaptation" in the field of tactics — was a carbon copy of the procedure of Shachtman, who subordinated the "general principle" of the class nature of the state to what he called "the realities of living events." It was no accident that Haston's political degeneration followed the same pattern as Shachtman's.

Healy's emergence into the leadership of the Trotskyist movement in Britain was the outcome of the principled struggle he waged against Haston. Healy's betrayals in the 1970s and 1980s do not detract from his positive achievements in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. In fact, we oppose Healy today precisely because we still defend the ideas and principles in which he once believed, but which he has now abandoned. It is, however, ironic that Healy's political degeneration was bound up with his unabashed reversion to Haston's view that "empirical adaptation" in tactics requires the subordination of "general principles" to the "flow of class forces."

In the period which this chapter examines, Healy opposed Haston's defense of Morrow's line on bourgeois democracy and the Soviet Union. Moreover, Healy *correctly* fought for an entrant line in relation to the British Labour Party. In depicting this necessary tactical orientation as the "transformation of the Healy group into an adjunct of the Bevanite left," Banda is simply regurgitating the old arguments thrown up by Haston, who soon deserted the Trotskyist movement and became an out-and-out anticommunist and a servant of the extreme right wing of the TUC bureaucracy!

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## Cannon's "American Theses"

Let us move on to the next major point made by Banda in his indictment of the International Committee of the Fourth International:

The most significant revision in the immediate post-war period was Cannon's 1946 American Theses which was a continuation of his national-defencist orientation covered up in seemingly revolutionary terms. It apotheosized American exceptionalism and under the guise of projecting a unique American road to socialism wrote off the European socialist revolution and with it the collective theoretical collaboration in continuing Trotsky's work and concretizing his historical prognosis.

This attack exposes yet again how woefully ignorant Banda is about the history of the Trotskyist movement. Although he cites the "American Theses" — the popular name of the famous perspectives document adopted by the SWP at its 1946 convention — as a major step in the political disintegration of the SWP and the Fourth International, anyone who studies the text of this document will see that its content bears no resemblance to the description given by Banda. Indeed, it is probable that Banda has never even read the "American Theses."

The "American Theses" developed out of the struggle against the right-wing Morrow-Goldman minority which, with the support of Max Shachtman, had written off the socialist revolution in Europe and scoffed at the very

suggestion that the American working class could overthrow capitalism in the United States.

Their demand that the Trotskyist movement concentrate its political work on agitation in support of bourgeois-democratic and reformist demands was complemented by an increasingly hysterical anti-Sovietism that was summed up in the 1946 document of Jean Van Heijenoort, "The Eruption of Bureaucratic Imperialism."

Every inner-party struggle is a reflection of the class struggle, and the 1944-46 struggle against the Morrow-Goldman tendency was no exception. As in 1939-40, but under different and even more politically-developed conditions, it reflected a clash between the proletarian forces within the SWP, led by Cannon, and a right-wing petty-bourgeois clique. Indeed, the struggle revealed the substantial political gains that had been made by the SWP since 1940 in carrying through the proletarianization for which Trotsky had fought and deepening its roots within the American working class.

Unlike 1940, when Shachtman had the support of nearly half the party, the Goldman-Morrow tendency was virtually isolated, at a time when the SWP was far larger than it had been during the fight against Shachtman. Between the imprisonment of the SWP 18 in January 1944 and the party's Twelfth National Convention in November 1946, it had recruited more than 1,000 new members and had developed factions in trade unions throughout basic industry.

The fight against Morrow and Goldman has sometimes been described as the tail end of the Shachtman split. But the political issues dividing Shachtmanism from Trotskyism and the petty-bourgeois radicals from the Marxist proletarian vanguard had become more clearly defined. This reflected the development of the class struggle in the United States and the qualitative growth in the world role of American imperialism in the postwar period. The Goldman-Morrow tendency reflected the desertion of large sections of the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia from the workers' movement into the camp of US imperialism.

The SWP waged an irreconcilable struggle against this tendency, and this in itself demonstrated the class forces upon which its leadership rested. This is one question that

Banda never cares to answer: what class interests were defended by Cannon and the SWP in their fight against Morrow-Goldman? The answer to this question becomes clear enough if one considers the evolution of the leaders of this tendency.

By 1948, as the Cold War was heating up and with the anticommunist purge of the labor movement well under way, Morrow abandoned revolutionary politics altogether. He went into the publishing business and purportedly became a millionaire. Upon the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950, he supported American imperialism. Goldman, after a brief sojourn in the Workers Party, also broke entirely with the socialist movement. He endorsed the intervention of US imperialism against Korea and later provided information to the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Van Heijenoort deserted the socialist movement as well and became an ardent anticommunist. For reasons which he never chose to make clear, he maintained an extensive file of addresses of his old contacts within the Trotskyist movement. In 1982, he was deposed by attorneys representing Alan Gelfand in a lawsuit aimed at exposing agents in the leadership of the SWP. When asked if he had worked as a government informer, Van Heijenoort refused to answer.

The drafting of the "American Theses" was the culmination of the struggle against this right-wing and retrograde tendency, which shared the arrogant conviction of Henry Luce and the Truman administration that the end of World War II had opened up the beginning of the "American Century" — a prediction which prompted Cannon to observe, "Well, some centuries are shorter than others."

Contrary to Banda's claim that the "American Theses" "apotheosized American exceptionalism," it was directed precisely against all those who invoked this supposed exceptionalism to argue that socialist revolution was impossible. In a report to the political committee of the SWP prior to the publication of the "Theses," Cannon emphasized that genuine internationalism was incompatible with skepticism about the prospects for socialist revolution in the United States. Reviewing the development of the American radical movement, he explained that internationalism had been

understood in the past mainly from the standpoint of international solidarity with struggles in other countries, not as a world perspective which grasped the development of the class struggle in the United States as part of the world revolution. The prime advocates of this nationalistic outlook were, he explained, the followers of Jay Lovestone, whose theory of "‘American exceptionalism’ ... in essence amounted to the idea that America was outside of revolutionary developments for a whole epoch."<sup>1</sup>

Cannon noted that the Wall Street crash of 1929 and the Great Depression produced an awareness of revolutionary possibilities within the United States, not only among workers, but also middle-class intellectuals. However, the end of the war and the economic revival produced a reversion to the old views, which found their consummate expression in the perspectives of the Shachtmanites and the SWP minority.

During the summer, while we were discussing these ideas and formulating some of them out in California ... I took occasion to study very attentively the bulletins of the Shachtmanites to see to what extent they have occupied themselves with this question of the perspectives of the American Revolution. And it is really astonishing to see that they haven't given it a thought....

We have always believed in the American revolution, and it is from that concept — even though we did not generalize it — that we derived our conception of the party: for example, of a revolutionary combat party, of a professional leadership, of an optimistic morale, of harsh demands upon the membership. Goldman, and later Morrow, and others attack us on these derivative conceptions. They are against the homogeneous party. They are against this combat nonsense. They are against discipline. Morrow, at the last plenum, called our revolutionary exhortations "dope." We dope up the party with fantasies, etc. Now, if you stop to think about it, this debate about the conception of the party is a rather sterile debate if you isolate it from your milieu and your perspective. If socialism is only a remote aspiration, a moral ideal, or an ultimate goal that you hope for as men of goodwill hope for the moral regeneration of the world, what in the hell do you want a tightly disciplined combat party with a professional leadership for? It becomes a caricature.<sup>2</sup>

Responding directly to the skeptics of the Shachtman-Morrow school, he made an observation that is no less relevant today:

I think nothing condemns a party more than a lack of faith in its own future. I don't believe it is possible for any party to lead a revolution if it doesn't even have the ambition to do so. That is the case with the Shachtmanites and the case with Goldman and Morrow. The Shachtmanites assert that neither their party nor ours is the party of the future revolution. Somewhere, somehow, out of something or other, it will arise, they hope.

We must assert as a matter of course that our party is going to lead the revolution.<sup>3</sup>

The best answer to Banda's attack on the "American Theses" is to reproduce substantial sections of the document, so that the reader can judge for himself how Cannon "apotheosized American exceptionalism" and "wrote off the European socialist revolution."

The document begins as follows:

I. The United States, the most powerful capitalist country in history, is a component part of the world capitalist system and is subject to the same general laws. It suffers from the same incurable diseases and is destined to share the same fate. The overwhelming preponderance of American imperialism does not exempt it from the decay of world capitalism, but on the contrary acts to involve it ever more deeply, inextricably, and hopelessly. U.S. capitalism can no more escape from the revolutionary consequences of world capitalist decay than the older European capitalist powers. The blind alley in which world capitalism has arrived, and the U.S. with it, excludes a new organic era of capitalist stabilization. The dominant world position of American imperialism now accentuates and aggravates the death agony of capitalism as a whole.

II. American imperialism emerged victorious from the Second World War, not merely over its German and Japanese rivals, but also over its "democratic" allies, especially Great Britain.... Wall Street hopes to inaugurate the so-called American Century.

In reality, the American ruling class faces more insurmountable obstacles in "organizing the world" than confronted the German bourgeoisie in its repeated and

abortive attempts to attain a much more modest goal, namely: "organizing Europe."

The meteoric rise of U.S. imperialism to world supremacy comes too late. Moreover, American imperialism rests increasingly on the foundations of world economy, in sharp contrast to the situation prevailing before the First World War, when it rested primarily on the internal market — the source of its previous successes and equilibrium. But the world foundation is today shot through with insoluble contradictions; it suffers from chronic dislocations and is mined with revolutionary powder kegs.

American capitalism, hitherto only partially involved in the death agony of capitalism as a world system, is henceforth subject to the full and direct impact of all the forces and contradictions that have debilitated the old capitalist countries of Europe.

The economic prerequisites for the socialist revolution are fully matured in the U.S. The political premises are likewise far more advanced than might appear on the surface.<sup>4</sup>

As for the claim that Cannon "under the guise of projecting a unique American road to socialism wrote off the European socialist revolution," this is directly contradicted by the text of the document:

IX. The revolutionary movement of the American workers is an organic part of the world revolutionary process. The revolutionary upheavals of the European proletariat which lie ahead will complement, reinforce, and accelerate the revolutionary developments in the U.S. The liberationist struggles of the colonial peoples against imperialism which are unfolding before our eyes will exert a similar influence. Conversely, each blow dealt by the American proletariat to the imperialists at home will stimulate, supplement, and intensify the revolutionary struggles in Europe and the colonies. Every reversal suffered by imperialism anywhere will in turn produce ever-greater repercussions in this country, generating such speed and power as will tend to reduce all time intervals both at home and abroad.<sup>6</sup>

Cannon placed special emphasis on the central significance of the socialist revolution in the United States, a perspective that was defended by the SWP until the mid-1950s, when it began its political retreat toward Pabloism and eventually



wrote off the American working class. But in 1946, the high-water mark of the SWP's political development as a revolutionary party, Cannon put forward a bold and inspiring perspective:

X. The role of America in the world is decisive. Should the European and colonial revolutions, now on the order of the day, precede in point of time the culmination of the struggle in the U.S., they would immediately be confronted with the necessity of defending their conquests against the economic and military assaults of the American imperialist monster. The ability of the victorious insurgent peoples everywhere to maintain themselves would depend to a high degree on the strength and fighting capacity of the revolutionary labor movement in America. The American workers would then be obliged to come to their aid, just as the Western European working class came to the aid of the Russian revolution and saved it by blocking full-scale imperialist military assaults upon the young workers' republic.<sup>6</sup>

Among the accusations Banda repeatedly hurls against Cannon is that the SWP leader capitulated to the "backward" workers of the United States. (As a matter of fact, whenever Banda refers to workers in any country, "backward" is his favorite and most frequently-used adjective.) Cannon, in the midst of a ruthless struggle to defend the proletarian orientation of the SWP, dealt with this question:

XIII. Much has been said about the "backwardness" of the American working class as a justification for a pessimistic outlook, the postponement of the socialist revolution to a remote future, and withdrawal from the struggle. This is a very superficial view of the American workers and their prospects.

It is true that this class, in many respects the most advanced and progressive in the world, has not yet taken the road of independent political action on a mass scale. But this weakness can be swiftly overcome. Under the compulsion of objective necessity not only backward peoples but backward classes in advanced countries find themselves driven to clear great distances in single leaps....

XV. The hopeless contradictions of American capitalism, inextricably tied up with the death agony of world capitalism, are bound to lead to a social crisis of such

catastrophic proportions as will place the proletarian revolution on the order of the day. In this crisis, it is realistic to expect that the American workers, who attained trade union consciousness and organization within a single decade, will pass through another great transformation in their mentality, attaining political consciousness and organization. If in the course of this dynamic development a mass labor party based on the trade unions is formed, it will not represent a detour into reformist stagnation and futility, as happened in England and elsewhere in the period of capitalist ascent. From all indications, it will rather represent a preliminary stage in the political radicalization of the American workers, preparing them for the direct leadership of the revolutionary party.<sup>7</sup>

For those who wish to attack the document on something other than the obviously dishonest grounds chosen by Banda, they will inevitably point to the categorical terms in which it predicted a terminal economic crisis of American capitalism. It anticipated, "Once the internal market is again saturated, no adequate outlet can be hoped for in the unbalanced world market...."

"The home market, after an initial and artificial revival, must contract. It cannot expand as it did in the twenties."<sup>8</sup>

The course of developments proceeded differently. But is Cannon to be criticized for not having anticipated, on the basis of the betrayals of the European proletariat by the Stalinists and social democrats between 1944 and 1948, the reestablishment of the political equilibrium of capitalist rule which created the conditions for the postwar boom? In 1946 the future course of the crisis was not so clear. The previous 17 years had been dominated by catastrophic economic crises. Moreover, the SWP concentration on the limitations of the American home market was not misplaced. As Bretton Woods and a host of other critical economic conferences made clear, American imperialism was preoccupied with the problem of restoring international trade and markets for US goods. Without the Marshall Plan and the vast increase in the volume of capital exported overseas, the United States would have certainly faced a devastating financial crisis in the late 1940s.

Cannon's economic projections were by no means far-fetched. The problem of restoring world trade without a renewal of the ruthless trade warfare and autarchic policies of the previous decade dominated the thinking of the leading representatives of US imperialism. This is how the astute Harry Dexter White, the architect of the IMF and the World Bank, posed the problem confronting world capitalism at the end of the World War:

A breach must be made and widened in the outmoded and disastrous economic policy of each-country-for-itself-and-the-devil-take-the-weakest. Just as the failure to develop an effective League of Nations has made possible two devastating wars within one generation, so the absence of a high degree of economic collaboration among leading nations will, during the coming decade, inevitably result in economic warfare that will be but a prelude and instigator of military warfare on an even vaster scale.<sup>9</sup>

The prospect of economic collapse and war did not appear as outlandish to even the bourgeoisie in 1945-46 as Banda, who is blessed with the proverbial 20-20 hindsight, would have us believe. At any rate, Cannon's projections did not proceed, as did those of Morrow and Shachtman, from the inevitable and inexorable character of capitalist restabilization. Those who wish to hold against Cannon the fact that he proceeded from the revolutionary potential within the objective situation and that he did not base his calculations on the possibilities for a stabilization which had not yet been achieved must render an even more severe judgment against those two notorious crissmongers, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. What are we to make of their anticipation of immense revolutionary upheavals as a consequence of the world economic crisis of 1857-58? When signs of an upturn were already on the horizon, Engels wrote:

We can only hope that this "improvement" in the crisis from the acute to the chronic stage sets in before a second and really decisive blow falls....

Physically, the crisis will do me as much good as a bathe in the sea; I can sense it already. In 1848 we were saying: Now our time is coming, and SO IN A CERTAIN SENSE it was, but this time it is coming properly; now it's a case of do or

die. This will at once give a more practical slant to my military studies.<sup>10</sup>

The fundamental historical conceptions of the "American Theses" — "In sum, the major factors that once served to foster and fortify American capitalism either no longer exist or are turning into their opposites" — were correct; and it is for this reason that the "American Theses" deserves an honored place in the documentary record of the history of the Fourth International.

Banda calls it "the most significant revision in the immediate post war period." Revision of what, may we ask? It would be impossible to point out a single point in which the "American Theses" refutes or contradicts the historical perspective advanced in the founding document of the Fourth International, the *Transitional Program*.

As for the nonsensical claim that the "American Theses" repudiated the "collective theoretical collaboration in continuing Trotsky's work and concretizing his historical prognosis," Cannon's report to the SWP Political Committee stressed that the document was based entirely on theoretical conceptions of the development of the class struggle in the United States that Trotsky had elaborated in his writings and in numerous meetings with SWP leaders. This included Trotsky's hypothetical suggestion that it was possible to foresee conditions in which the socialist revolution in the United States could precede the proletariat's victory in Europe.

The "American Theses" was the product of the struggle against revisionism which developed inside the Fourth International during and in the immediate aftermath of the war. Banda does not substantiate a single allegation. Insofar as he bothers to cite a document, it turns out that its content is the very opposite of what he says it is.

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## The Fourth International After the War

Some of Banda's assertions are so fantastic that one would not be surprised to learn that he wrote parts of his "27 Reasons" under the influence of drugs. Out of the blue he claims, "The Second Congress of 1948 was noted for its myopic insistence that imperialism was still stable and Stalinism unshaken." By whom was this noted?

This is the type of "one-liner" in which Banda specializes. A bizarre and provocative condemnation of the proceedings of an entire World Congress is pronounced without so much as an analysis of even a single contemporary document. We have already established that the preceding four years were dominated by a struggle against those revisionist elements within the Fourth International who rejected any perspective for socialist revolution.

A brief review of the "Manifesto of the Second Congress of the Fourth International" shows how it expressed its confidence in the "stability" of imperialism and "unshaken" strength of Stalinism: "Beneath its leaden crust, all the forces of decomposition within capitalism are continually at work. The system reels from social explosions which are leading to an international conflagration. The 'highest' stage of capitalist organization is revealed as the organization of bloody chaos, which places the communist revolution on the order of the day."<sup>1</sup>

The document explained that

the power and wealth of the United States are carved out of the stagnation and decline of the rest of the capitalist world, this decline in turn reacts irrevocably against the United States....

American economy, politics and culture show all the signs of an approaching crisis. The terrible burden of public debt devours the nation's reserves. A raging fever of inflation, speculation, and unproductive investments, which always precedes a severe financial crisis, has gripped the nation.<sup>2</sup>

In a prophetic analysis of the world role of the United States, the "Manifesto" declared:

Just emerging from their provincialism, the American imperialists find themselves confronted with the task of protecting capital throughout the five continents.... British imperialism was able to maintain world supremacy through economic power alone. American imperialism is today obliged to equip mercenary armies in every country. The British capitalists, in their period of ascendancy, were able to corrupt their own working class movement with crumbs from their world profits. But Yankee imperialism in the period of capitalist decline cannot establish world domination without completely militarizing its own country and housebreaking its own proletariat. That is why the world offensive of American imperialism serves, at the same time, to educate the American proletariat in world politics. The forces liberated by the American crisis will line up in direct opposition to Wall Street's imperialist policy. The American working class will find itself for the first time face to face with its communist destiny.<sup>3</sup>

On the question of Stalinism, the congress was obliged to make its first accounting of the implications of the extension of Soviet influence into Eastern Europe. This issue soon provided the impulse for a controversy within the Fourth International out of which Pablo's fundamental revisions of Trotskyism arose.

In retrospect, it is now possible to detect in certain formulations faint signals of the developing differences which were to erupt five years later. (Similarly, following the outbreak of World War I and the betrayal of the Second International, Lenin retrospectively appreciated the revision-

ist implications of certain formulations employed by Kautsky in documents whose orthodoxy had been previously accepted by the Bolsheviks.)

However, the delegates to the Second Congress were equipped neither with crystal balls nor geiger counters. The analysis of Stalinism was fundamentally correct. The "Manifesto" stressed the contradictions underlying the growth of Stalinist influence in the period following the war.

Viewing the results of the bureaucracy's expansion, some short-sighted petty bourgeois "theoreticians," who have long ago lost all faith in the proletarian revolution, marvel at the "successes" of "Stalinist realism." "Haven't the nationalizations been extended to all of Eastern Europe?" they say.

Others, mortally frightened by the "increasing strength" of Stalinism, see in it the representative of a new monstrous exploiting society headed for world domination. The hysteria of both sides is strangely in harmony with Stalinist propaganda, the product of the most vulgar impressionism.

Stalin's "socialist conquests" in Eastern Europe were in reality conceded to him at Teheran, Yalta and Potsdam. In exchange for these "conquests" Stalin betrayed the August 1942 uprising in India, ordered the disarming of the partisans in Greece, delivered the mass movement in France to de Gaulle, returned the tottering bourgeoisie to power in all the countries of Western Europe and helped crush the German proletariat.

By his infamous practices of dismantling, looting, deportation and terror, Stalin succeeded in arousing even within the world labor movement, deep feelings of hostility toward the Soviet Union such as Hitler had never been able to produce. This is the impressive balance sheet of Stalinist "victories."...

Stalin has utilized the breathing spell he gained for the most abominable crimes. Whatever may be his further successes, he is rushing headlong to his ruin.<sup>4</sup>

Rejecting the claim that the sole alternative to imperialism is Stalinism, the "Manifesto" asserted:

The power of Stalinism in the working class is a product of the material power of its apparatus combined with the revolutionary tradition of the past which it still represents in the eyes of the broad masses. As Engels pointed out a

century ago, tradition represents one of the greatest forces for inertia in history. To wrest from Stalinism the leadership of the working class, it is necessary to begin where the Social Democracy and the Communist Party left off. It is necessary to build powerful workers' organizations. It is necessary to educate a new generation of revolutionary worker cadres, who through numerous successive experiences in struggle, will succeed in rooting themselves in the working class and gaining its respect and confidence. It is necessary to build a genuine party which, through ever wider activities, will eventually appear in all mass movements as the real alternative to the bankrupt leaderships. By relying firmly on its revolutionary program, by orienting itself toward the most exploited layers of society, by maintaining complete confidence in the profoundly revolutionary combat power of the proletariat — that is how the Fourth International will finally destroy the obstacle of Stalinism within the working class movement.<sup>5</sup>

This perspective was a far cry from the revisionist program with which Pablo later sought to liquidate the cadre of the Fourth International into the Stalinist machine. The scope of the political transformation which was to occur in the line of the Fourth International and the speed with which it developed demonstrates the necessity of a historical materialist analysis of objective changes in social relations on a world scale and their political reflection inside the Trotskyist movement.

In another reference to the Second Congress, Banda makes the extraordinary claim, "On the central issue of Israel the FI did not oppose the creation of the Zionist enclave and call for its overthrow but — bowing to Mandel's Zionist proclivities — called disarmingly for the restriction of immigration, a demand readily supported by Stalinists and Labour Lefts."

In fact, the Fourth International consistently opposed the formation of a Zionist state in the Middle East. This was one of the issues which divided the SWP from the Shachtmanites and Felix Morrow. Though it had tirelessly campaigned for the unlimited entry of Jews into the United States during World War II, the SWP opposed Jewish emigration to Arab Palestine, on the grounds that it would be used to create an anti-Arab imperialist beachhead. Morrow denounced the



position of the SWP, echoing the concessions made by Shachtman to Zionism.

A resolution passed at the Second Congress declared:

The Fourth International rejects as utopian and reactionary the "Zionist solution," of the Jewish question. It declares that a total renunciation of Zionism is the *sine qua non* condition for the merging of Jewish workers' struggles with the social, national and liberationist struggles of the Arab toilers. It declares that to demand Jewish immigration into Palestine is thoroughly reactionary just as it is reactionary to call for immigration of any oppressor people into colonial countries in general. It holds that the question of immigration as well as the relations between Jews and Arabs can be decided adequately only after imperialism has been ousted by a freely elected Constituent Assembly with full rights for the Jews as a national minority.<sup>6</sup>

There are innumerable articles to be found in the pages of the *Militant* and other publications of the Fourth International specifically condemning Zionism and the goal of a Jewish state in Palestine. Moreover, the Fourth International's rejection of Jewish immigration in April 1948 — just one month before the proclamation of the state of Israel — placed it in unambiguous opposition to the central demand of the Zionists as they completed plans to establish a beachhead for US imperialism in the Middle East.

The reference to Mandel's "Zionist proclivities" in 1948 has no factual basis, unless Banda is deducing these "proclivities" from Mandel's family ancestry. It is a libel to suggest that the Fourth International would base its political line on such personal "proclivities," were one even to assume that they existed.

Banda then attempts to make a meal out of the entry of the Johnson-Forrest tendency into the SWP, after it had broken with Shachtman's Workers Party: "State capitalism, again on Mandel's insistence, was declared to be compatible with Trotskyism. This was an outrageous repudiation of Trotsky's crucial struggle against Burnham-Shachtman."

It was no such thing. Like any other event in the history of the Fourth International, this particular episode cannot be understood outside of its political context. As anyone who

has read the documents of the 1939-40 struggle knows, Trotsky explicitly opposed making a splitting issue out of Shachtman's position on the class nature of the USSR. He insisted that a minority could hold such a position within the Fourth International as long as it was prepared to abide by the democratic-centralist discipline of the organization. Shachtman refused to accept this condition and split from the SWP.

As we have already noted, that split was of a fundamental character. The opposing class tendencies and their irreconcilable differences on theoretical, political and organizational issues were brought out into the open. However, the split in 1940 did not simply settle for all time the problem of Shachtmanism in the labor movement, especially in the United States. The Shachtmanites continued to insist that they adhered to the Fourth International. The abortive "unity discussions" between 1945 and 1948 were decisive in establishing that Shachtman, despite his claims to the contrary, represented a tendency hostile to Trotskyism.

During the maneuvering which accompanied those discussions, there is no question that the SWP made a number of tactical errors which no doubt reflected a degree of theoretical confusion within its leadership. There was a potentially dangerous tendency to place too much credibility on the claims made by Shachtman that unity could be achieved once outstanding organizational problems were resolved.

In February 1947, a resolution was presented to the SWP National Committee, drafted by Cannon, Morris Stein and George Clarke, indicating that unity with the Workers Party was imminent. It accepted Shachtman's claim that his organization was prepared, "without qualifications or conditions, to accept the decisions of the extraordinary party convention projected for the coming fall and to obey its discipline politically as well as organizationally."<sup>7</sup>

Within weeks, however, it became clear that the supposed "left turn" by the Shachtmanites toward the acceptance of a principled unity had been incorrectly evaluated by the SWP. As Cannon admitted:

I consider that I and some others did make an error to this extent, that the turn made by the Shachtmanites in February was taken too much at face value and that sufficient allowance was not made for a zigzag in the other direction.... not sufficient allowance was made for the petty-bourgeois centrist nature of this group and that their turn to the left was not taken with the necessary reserves and cautions and anticipation of another zigzag to the right.<sup>8</sup>

At its plenum in February 1948, the SWP recorded the collapse of all unity talks with the Workers Party with a statement which declared:

"The rejection of the road to unity confronts the members of the WP either with the prospect of a revisionist future without perspective or a return to the doctrines of revolutionary Marxism and the Movement. Those who wish to build a genuine revolutionary workers' party in the country along Trotskyist lines have no choice but to quit this bankrupt petty-bourgeois group and join the ranks of the SWP."<sup>9</sup>

Reviewing this entire experience with the Shachtmanites, the Second World Congress of the Fourth International concluded, "The WP is at the present stage a politically hostile formation to the SWP and the International, and the impossibility of unity flows above all from the magnitude of the political differences. Not 'unity' with the WP but its removal from the path of the proletarian party's progress is the task."<sup>10</sup>

The manner in which the SWP approached the problem of unity with the Shachtmanites in 1945-47 was the complete opposite of the method employed by Joseph Hansen and the SWP a decade and a half later in relation to the Pabloites. The error noted and corrected by Cannon in 1947 — "not sufficient allowance was made for the petty bourgeois centrist nature of this group" — was repeated and even made a virtue. In 1961-63, the SWP insisted on organizational unity prior to political discussion and clarification of the outstanding differences.

C.L.R. James (Johnson) and Raya Dunayevskaya (Forrest) broke with the Shachtmanites to join the SWP. These two

leaders of a small faction had been members of the Fourth International prior to the 1940 split, and though they went with Shachtman they later developed differences over his fervent endorsement of the IKD's "Three Theses."

It is true that two years later they both deserted the SWP over the Korean War, but to call this mini-mini split a "lamentable price" which proves, "The entire Trotskyist heritage was being dumped three years before the arch-revisionist Pablo appeared on the scene" is absurd. Banda would have a point only if the SWP had capitulated to the Johnson-Forrest tendency with the outbreak of the Korean War. As it so happens, they made little headway with their views inside the SWP.

Moreover, the outbreak of the Korean War was the major postwar event which put the state capitalists to the test and decisively exposed them as apologists for imperialism within the workers' movement. By 1950, the implications of Trotsky's warnings were fully realized, above all in the fate of Shachtman himself.

Despite his personal devotion to Trotsky, the logic of his uncorrected petty-bourgeois political and methodological positions led to his transformation into an instrument of alien class forces and, ultimately, into a counterrevolutionary. Even though this evolution had been predicted and theoretically anticipated, it was still necessary for the Fourth International to pass through a series of additional experiences after 1940, just as Lenin and the Bolsheviks had to pass through many different experiences — including joint dissolution of factions, unity congresses, etc. — after the "historically-decisive" split of 1903.

Banda's treatment of all these episodes reflects his own petty-bourgeois position. He cannot rise above subjective evaluations and anecdotal descriptions to the level of an analysis of social relations and the objective development of the class struggle, outside of which the evolution of factions, tendencies and their individual representatives cannot be understood.

There is another stunning revelation made by Banda which supposedly exposes Cannon's diabolical betrayal, "After the Second Congress there was a systematic campaign waged by

the SWP in collaboration with Healy to create a cult of Pablo and Mandel as the political executors of Trotsky — if not the greatest living political geniuses and strategists.”

What is the source of this astonishing information?

In a discussion with myself and the late P.K. Roy of the Indian section, the late Farrell Dobbs candidly admitted that the SWP consciously built up Pablo as the living embodiment of Trotskyism because they feared the death of Trotsky had left a void which had to be filled up! This was the essence of the theoretical bankruptcy of the SWP — and of the whole FI leadership — and the most cogent proof of the pragmatism which had doomed the SWP.... The creation of a cult figure in Pablo was itself the corollary to the dogmatizing of Trotskyism by the SWP.

The two interlocutors mentioned by Banda are conveniently dead and cannot contradict his version of events. But it is so ludicrous as not to even merit serious attention. Cheap psychology is offered as a substitute for political analysis: Cannon “built up” Pablo to fill the “void” left by Trotsky. We know of no documents, not to mention monuments and icons, which substantiate the existence of this peculiar equivalent of the “cult of the personality” inside the Fourth International. In fact, it never existed. We cannot deal with the content of Banda’s supposed discussion with men who are no longer among the living. The history of the Trotskyist movement must be based on a study of the written record, and not upon some sort of oral tradition and factionally-tainted recollections.

On several occasions, Cannon spoke directly of the significance of Trotsky’s death, always to oppose those, like Felix Morrow and other right-wingers and open enemies of the movement, who suggested that the fate of the Fourth International rested upon one man, even if that man was a genius like Trotsky. His most direct statement on this subject came at an SWP plenum in May 1946:

We have seen a conception grow in our party, and not only in our party, since the death of Trotsky, that what can save the Fourth International, the only thing that can save it, is to find a messiah somewhere. That is, collective work, in the process of which mistakes are corrected and the right answers are found, that the strict adherence to the program

and the collaboration between party members, the election of functioning leadership in parties and the collaboration between the leaders of one party and another in an international center, that that cannot suffice. We must have somebody who stands above that and leads in his personal capacity as an individual. That is the messianic complex. That has been at the bottom of all the grumbling we have heard for years, ever since the death of Trotsky.

We heard it for the first time openly in the Fifteenth Anniversary Plenum, two and one-half years ago. "Cannon does not replace Trotsky" — which is hardly an exaggerated statement. But behind that statement — "Cannon does not take the place of Trotsky" — lurks the feeling, *somebody* must take the place of Trotsky. We said, the International on an international scale must take the place of Trotsky because Trotskys don't grow on trees. And at the bottom of this assertion of self-misled individuals there lurks a feeling that perhaps they have been touched by the holy fire, there lurks a lack of confidence in the collective ability of the party to lead itself and to forge its leadership. That is wrong from beginning to end.

And the pretensions of these people who set themselves up above the party, above the international leadership appointed by the conference — their pretensions do not accord with reality. We are living in a different stage of the development of the Fourth International. We are living in the post-Trotsky stage. Five years, six years nearly now, since the death of Trotsky, and the whole thing, the whole international movement, has readjusted itself to the necessities of this new period. What do we have? We have the ideas of Trotsky and we have the cadres that were created by these ideas, and with that we are working and living with confidence in the future.<sup>11</sup>

Cannon did not "build up" Pablo to fill a void — because he did not believe that a void existed in the Fourth International. In the 1940s and into the 1950s, Cannon still had confidence in the power of the ideas which had been left behind by Trotsky, and he was convinced that the "men of common clay" who worked with these ideas could build the Fourth International and lead, under its banner, the world socialist revolution.

It is, of course, true that Cannon sought to encourage Pablo in the late 1940s, as he himself had been encouraged by

Trotsky. Cannon often spoke and wrote of Trotsky's exceptional tact and patience in his dealings with the international movement. This approach, for which there is a great deal to be said, undoubtedly influenced Cannon.

There is also evidence that he was inclined to forgive certain errors committed by Pablo in the 1940s, such as his unfortunate intervention in the early stages of the Morrow-Goldman faction fight, which Cannon initially attributed to the younger man's lack of experience. Somewhat later, in the 1950s, in his response to Renard's plea over the bureaucratic actions of Pablo, with which we shall deal later on, Cannon was guilty of a serious political mistake.

But all these developments must be examined objectively, which requires, at the very least, honesty. Unfortunately, this last quality is not to be found in Banda. In the period following World War II, there existed a principled basis for collaboration between Cannon and the leadership of the IEC, represented by Pablo and Germain (Mandel). The fact that irreconcilable differences emerge out of even the oldest and closest alliances is by no means proof that the relationship was wrong from the outset and unprincipled.

In the historical evolution of every genuine revolutionary movement, political relations are constantly reevaluated and redefined. The development of Marxism does not invalidate this process, but gives to its participants the possibility of consciously evaluating these objective transformations as they occur, tracing their class origins and political implications, and, if possible, avoiding irreparable splits, or, if necessary, carrying them through with ruthless decisiveness.

# 12

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## The Fourth International and the Yugoslav Revolution

Thus far, we have sought to answer and expose, in chronological sequence, point by point, Banda's libelous diatribe against the Fourth International, the Socialist Workers Party and James P. Cannon. This has been necessary because Banda's depiction of the Fourth International between the death of Trotsky in 1940 and the Third Congress in 1951 as an organization led by assorted political misfits and social miscreants is central to his fundamental thesis that "Pablo never destroyed the FI because the FI had not been built. The FI of Pablo, Cannon and Healy was a surrogate international, a historical accident and the misbegotten product of an unprincipled alliance shot through with opportunism and political double-talk...."

The history of the Trotskyist movement must first of all be studied as an objective social process whose internal battles are a concentrated expression of the development of the class struggle itself. What is common to Banda and all his co-renegades inside the Workers Revolutionary Party is that while they belittle the split with Pablo and denounce Cannon's "Open Letter," none of them even attempts an objective study of the *class forces* represented in this struggle.

As for Banda, he combines a blatant falsification of the social content of the split with a wildly subjective interpreta-



tion of the origins of revisionism within the Fourth International. Cannon and Healy, he claims, "*first of all deliberately created a Frankenstein Monster in the form of Pablo*" and then issued the "Open Letter" "in the most arbitrary and hasty manner to give themselves an alibi for their own incredible political skulduggery."

Banda explains everything from the standpoint of the subjective intentions of various individuals. Pablo's rise, as well as his fall, was the product of sinister maneuvers plotted by evil conspirators operating behind the scenes. Banda never bothers to examine the actual interconnected process of changes in the objective situation and struggles within the Fourth International underlying the development of Pabloite revisionism. But such an analysis is the fundamental duty of a dialectical materialist, who, as Marx wrote, must study the "ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict [in the economic foundation of society] and fight it out."<sup>1</sup>

No Frankenstein theory of history can serve as a substitute for, let alone replace, historical materialism. We propose to briefly review the actual development of the theoretical struggles which ultimately erupted in 1953 at a very crucial stage in the crisis of world Stalinism. Whatever its political limitations — which reflected the severe crisis which was then wracking the Fourth International and the SWP — Cannon's "Open Letter" saved the Trotskyist movement from the imminent danger of complete liquidation. Banda once understood this, for he wrote in 1974: "In this tense and impossible situation a split was inevitable and Cannon's 'open letter' in December [*sic*] 1953 which denounced the International Secretariat for its treacherous role on the East Berlin uprising of June 1953, the French General Strike and the post-Stalin manoeuvres of the Kremlin leaders, met with a unanimous response from his supporters around the world."<sup>2</sup>

Now Banda refers to the "Open Letter" as an "epistle from the philistines of 'orthodox Trotskyism,'" a phrase that underscores his present thoroughgoing hatred of the principles upon which the Fourth International is based. Despite all his distortions of the 1953 split, a careful analysis of Banda's document makes clear that he has gone over entirely

to theoretical and political positions which have been historically identified with Pabloite revisionism.

This is made explicit when he declares that "the most cogent proof" of the world movement's bankruptcy — "Trotsky had sown dragon's teeth and reaped fleas" — was "the total failure of the FI to appreciate: (a) The military-bureaucratic changes in E. Europe until 1950 and the defeat of fascism by the Red Army, (b) The world-historical significance of the Chinese, Yugoslav and Indo-Chinese revolutions."

Banda never expands upon nor clarifies the political content of this attack. Aside from asserting that the defeats of imperialism in Eastern Europe and Asia provided the "most cogent proof" of the failure of the Fourth International, Banda does not explain, even in outline form, the objective significance of these events and their relation to the historical development of the Fourth International. The impression which a reader not familiar with the history of the Fourth International might draw from Banda's sketchy remarks is that the Trotskyist movement either ignored these great post-World War II developments or was incapable of understanding them.

In fact, not only were all these events exhaustively analyzed by the Fourth International: they provided the objective ground out of which the political and theoretical divisions which led ultimately to the split in 1953 arose. The basic claim of Pabloite revisionism, now echoed by Banda, was that the theoretical premises of Trotskyism had been irrevocably shattered by the revolutionary role supposedly played by Stalinism in Eastern Europe and Asia. The very fact that Banda says so little on this subject can only mean that he takes for granted, and assumes that everyone else does, that Trotskyism was refuted by Stalinism and its offshoots, Titoism and Maoism, in the 1940s.

Banda never states what it was that the Fourth International failed to appreciate in its analysis of the postwar social transformations in Eastern Europe and Asia. Based on the "successes" of Stalinism during this period — the conquest of power in Yugoslavia and the bureaucratic liquidation of capitalism in Eastern Europe — Pablo endowed the Soviet

bureaucracy with the decisive historical role in the ultimate victory of socialism. Pablo rejected Trotsky's conception of Stalinism as a parasitic excrescence of the first workers' state: a historically-transient aberration produced by a specific combination of economic and political circumstances, rooted in the backwardness of Russia, that arose after the 1917 revolution. He elevated Stalinism to the level of a historical necessity, destined to fulfill its role as the revolutionary midwife of socialism over a period of centuries!

Pablo did not produce his revisions of Trotskyism overnight. They emerged gradually over a number of years, reflecting changes in the relations between class forces on a world scale and his own increasingly impressionistic response to these developments. Banda's reference to the Trotskyist movement's supposed inability to appreciate the significance of developments in Eastern Europe "until 1950" repeats the Pabloite allegation that the Fourth International, blinded by "orthodoxy" (what Banda refers to as "the dogmatizing of Trotskyism by the SWP"), was unable to recognize or admit that Stalinism was capable of overthrowing capitalism and creating workers' states.

In studying the response of the Fourth International to the upheavals in Eastern Europe and Asia, it must be remembered that the conclusion of the second imperialist war in 1945 set into motion a protracted process of social transformations that did not permit immediate and definitive evaluations. The fact that the Fourth International did not arrive at the conclusion that *deformed* workers' states had been established in Eastern Europe until 1950-51 is no cause for an indictment headed by the words, "The Fourth International failed to appreciate...."

There existed no grounds for concluding, prior to 1948, that workers' states of any sort had been established in Eastern Europe. Not until the implementation of the Marshall Plan and the exertion of immense pressure by US imperialism against the Soviet Union did the Kremlin take the first steps toward liquidating the bourgeoisie in Eastern Europe.

When the Fourth International held its Second Congress in April 1948, in the midst of changes whose outcome was not

yet clear, it correctly maintained that capitalism had not been destroyed in the "buffer zone." The resolution of the Second Congress, "The World Situation and the Tasks of the Fourth International," stated:

24. In the "buffer" countries the state remains bourgeois:

a) Because the state structure remains bourgeois; nowhere has the old bureaucratic state machine been destroyed. The Stalinists have merely taken the place of the decisive layers in the bourgeois state apparatus.

b) Because the *function* of the state remains bourgeois. Whereas the workers' state defends the collective ownership of the means of production, arising from a victorious socialist revolution, the state of the "buffer" countries defends property which, despite its diverse and hybrid forms, remains fundamentally bourgeois in character....

Thus, while maintaining bourgeois function and structure, the state of the "buffer" countries represents at the same time an *extreme form of Bonapartism*. The Stalinist state apparatus has acquired a great degree of independence in relation to the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, not alone owing to the balance between and the growing prostration of both these classes; but, above all, owing to its intimate ties with the Soviet state apparatus and the overwhelming weight of the latter in Eastern Europe, amid the existing world relation of forces.<sup>3</sup>

The FI declared its opposition to any attempt by the bourgeoisie and the imperialists to restore the old regime: "In the case of any reactionary restorationist *coups d'etat*, led by imperialist agents, they must mobilize the proletariat in order to resort to action and crush the forces which can only establish a bloody fascist dictatorship in the country (as in Greece)....

"In the event of an armed attack of bourgeois reaction against the present regime, it will mobilize the working class against the bourgeoisie."<sup>4</sup>

Within a few months of the congress, the crisis of Stalinism erupted with the open breach between Tito and Stalin. The Fourth International and the Socialist Workers Party had been carefully studying the development of the Yugoslav revolution since 1942, attempting to analyze the objective significance of each stage of its development.

Unlike the Eastern European buffer states, the decisive struggle against German imperialism and its native bourgeois collaborators was waged in Yugoslavia by the mass partisan movement under the leadership of the Communist Party. The exigencies of the military struggle compelled Tito to repeatedly go beyond the limits which Stalin sought to impose upon the conduct of the war against the bourgeois collaborators.

Against the will and instructions of Stalin, Tito's partisan war unfolded simultaneously as a savage class struggle against the bourgeoisie and its principal military forces (Mihailovich's Chetniks). With 300,000 fighters under his command, Tito liberated huge areas of the country and established popular organs of rule. A coalition government with the bourgeoisie in 1944 (the agreement with Subasich), supported by Stalin and the imperialists, lasted only a year. The Communist Party of Yugoslavia, enjoying mass popular support, took power into its own hands and carried through over the next three years vast economic transformations based on the nationalization of industry and trade.

If the Fourth International did not immediately proclaim that a workers' state had been established in Yugoslavia, there existed crucial theoretical questions which had to be clarified before such a designation could be made. The greatest pressure for leaping to political conclusions about the nature of the state in Yugoslavia and the other buffer countries came from those who eventually arrived, via new sociological definitions, at revisionist political conclusions.

Nevertheless, the Fourth International responded to the Kremlin's attack on Tito with a powerful and principled defense of the Yugoslav revolution. The Fourth International understood the objective significance of what was occurring far more profoundly than any other tendency on the face of the earth.

An examination of the documents issued by the Fourth International on the questions raised by Yugoslavia and Eastern Europe is especially worthwhile because it illustrates the enormous concern given to such fundamental theoretical issues as the nature of state power and the content of the proletarian dictatorship — problems which were to be later

ignored or handled with the crudest empiricism by Hansen in relation to Cuba. But in 1948, no one in the Fourth International, except Jock Haston, was satisfied with the yardstick of common sense (i.e., "It looks like a workers' state, therefore it is a workers' state") to proclaim that the dictatorship of the proletariat existed in Yugoslavia.

On July 13, 1948, the Fourth International addressed a letter to the leadership and membership of the Yugoslav Communist Party from which we will quote at length. It examined the political alternatives available to the Tito leadership in the face of the direct threats of the Kremlin.

The first road open to you would be to consider that despite the serious injuries dealt you by the leaders of the Russian Communist Party, it is above all necessary today, in the present world situation, to maintain a complete monolithic unity with the policies and ideology of the Russian Communist Party. There are certainly members in your midst who will propose such a course and will even suggest that it is preferable, under these conditions, to make a public apology and a declaration accepting the "criticism" of the Cominform, even to change your leadership, and wait for a "better occasion" to defend your particular conceptions within the "big communist family."

Such a decision would be in our opinion an irreparable and tragic error and would do the greatest damage not only to your own party and your own working class but to the international proletariat and communist movement, above all to the workers in the USSR....

A second road will be certainly suggested, consisting essentially of retiring into Yugoslavia, repelling the attacks and the eventual violence and provocations of the Cominform and its agents, and attempting to "build socialism" in your own country, while concluding trade relations with the powers of Eastern Europe as well as with those of the imperialist West. We will not conceal from you, Comrades, that we consider this second road just as pernicious as the first.

It is completely utopian to think it possible to "maneuver" during a whole period between the USSR and the USA without being subject during this same period to a growing pressure from these two giants. The success of "maneuvers" depends in the final analysis on the relationship of

forces, and, on the plane of economic, political and military power, the relationship of forces is obviously not in your favor. American imperialism will gladly make some advances to you for that would increase the weight of its arguments in its conversations with Moscow. But what it is looking for basically is not to support you against the USSR but to conclude a compromise with Russia, if necessary at your expense. Not only would the present leaders of the Russian Communist Party have no hesitation about accepting such a compromise, but they would even work furiously to create the greatest economic difficulties for you so as to force you to capitulate or to surrender completely to Yankee imperialism, in order thereby to "demonstrate" to world working-class opinion that every rupture with Moscow signifies going over to the "American camp." ...

Finally, there remains the third road, the most difficult, bristling with the most obstacles, the genuine communist road for the Yugoslav party and proletariat. This road is the road of return to the Leninist conception of socialist revolution, of return to a world strategy of *class struggle*. It must start, in our opinion, with a clear understanding of the fact that the Yugoslav revolutionary forces can only become stronger and consolidate their positions thanks to the conscious support of the working masses of their own country and of the entire world. It means above all to understand that the decisive force on the world arena is neither imperialism with its resources and arms, nor the Russian state with its formidable apparatus. The decisive force is the immense army of workers, of poor peasants and of colonial peoples, whose revolt against their exploiters is steadily rising, and who need only a conscious leadership, a suitable program of action and an effective organization in order to bring the enormous task of world socialist revolution to a successful conclusion.

We do not presume to offer you a blueprint. We understand the tremendous difficulties which you must contend with in a poorly equipped country which has been devastated by war. We desire only to point out to you what are, in our opinion, the main lines through which to concretize this international revolutionary policy — the only policy which will enable you to hold out while waiting for new struggles of the masses, to stimulate them and to conquer with them.

To commit oneself to this road means, especially in Yugoslavia itself, to base oneself openly and completely on the revolutionary dynamics of the masses. The Front committees must be organs which are genuinely *elected* by the workers of city and country, arising from a tightly knit system of workers and of poor farmers.

They must become genuine state organs and must take the place of the present hybrid organs which are relics of the bourgeois state apparatus. They must be the organs of *Soviet democracy*, in which all workers will have the right to express their opinions and their criticisms without reservation and without fear of reprisal. The right of workers to organize other workers' parties must be laid down as a principle, subject only to the condition that they take their place within the framework of Soviet legality. The present hybrid constitution must be revised and a new one, taking its inspiration from the Leninist constitution of 1921, must be set up by an assembly of delegates from the workers' and poor peasants' committees.

These decisive political changes must be conceived as the end result of a real *mass mobilization*, to be brought about by your party through carrying these Leninist ideas into the most distant villages of your country, explaining the differences between the Soviet state and other state forms, and the superiority of the former type. That is the way Lenin did it in 1917, with the greatest simplicity. A vast campaign of reeducation must be started, together with a period of discussion and of unhampered expression of opinion by the workers. The latter will express their criticisms of the present state of affairs in their assemblies. The party will finally know, directly, what the real aspirations of the masses are, and will obtain the constructive suggestions of the working-class masses, whose vast creative energy is the surest guarantee of socialism. Your party has nothing to fear from such a development. The confidence of the masses in it will grow enormously and it will become the effective collective expression of the interests and desires of the proletariat of its country.

It will not be enough, however, to reestablish the complete sovereignty of the committees, to change the standing army into a genuine workers' and peasants' militia, to replace appointed judges with those elected by the masses, to reestablish and firmly maintain the principle of payment of functionaries on the basis of the average



wages of a skilled worker. The problem of the revolutionary transformation of your country is essentially an *economic* one, in which the question of the *peasantry* takes first place.

There is but one Leninist way to approach this problem: to seek support from the poor and exploited layers of the country and to be careful not to violate the laws whereby your economy functions, but on the contrary to utilize them in the interests of socialism. The land must be nationalized and a struggle waged against the concentration of income and property in the hands of the kulaks. But these measures cannot be made solely by administrative means, neither by decrees nor by force. What is necessary is that the immense majority of the peasants must view it as *in their own interests*. For this, a review of the Five Year Plan and the relations between agriculture and industry is necessary....

No group of *spetzes* [specialists] can ascertain mathematically the real equilibrium between the needs of the workers, those of the peasants, and the capital needs of the economy, upon which equilibrium depends the harmonious planning and development of the country. It is essential that the masses be induced to participate as actively as possible in the work of planning, that the greatest heed be paid to their complaints, and that the needs expressed by them be the primary factor in planning.

Complete sovereignty of the *factory committees* must be established in the plants, and genuine *workers' control of production* must be instituted. The trade unions must be granted their real function, which is to defend the interests of the workers, even against the Soviet State if necessary, as Lenin repeatedly asserted. In a word it is necessary to give the workers and poor peasants the clear feeling that they are the *masters in the country*, and that the state and the progress of the economy are in direct correspondence with their own interests....

Your possibilities for action along the road of genuine Leninism disclose themselves to be enormous. But your historical responsibility far surpasses everything which has been outlined above....<sup>5</sup>

After explaining the historical background of the Fourth International and its persecution by the Russian Communist Party, the letter continued:

But all these crimes did not succeed in smashing the **FOURTH INTERNATIONAL** because nothing can smash

genuine Leninism! Today it has sections in 35 different countries on all continents, consisting of battle-tested and experienced revolutionary Communist members who stand for what is best in their class. Although weak in material resources, its Second World Congress, held last April in Paris, demonstrated that it was strong in political cohesion, in program, and in its clear understanding of present-day reality. Today it is launching in all countries a vast campaign protesting against the bureaucratic measures which the Cominform has taken against you. It appeals to communist workers of all countries to send their delegations to Yugoslavia, in order to make a spot check of the real policy followed by your party. Tomorrow it will make your documents known in 20 different languages — for workers' democracy is not just an idle phrase to the Fourth International, and a communist cannot permit a member to be judged without a hearing. It asks that you allow a delegation from our leadership to attend your Congress, in order to establish contact with the Yugoslav communist movement and to set up fraternal ties which can serve only the interests of the world communist revolution.<sup>6</sup>

This document deserves extensive quotation not only because of its prescience in evaluating the perspectives of the Yugoslav revolution. More significant is the stark contrast between the method of this document and that which was to become characteristic of Pablo's later work. First and foremost, this open letter approached the Yugoslav developments from the standpoint of what it referred to as "a world strategy of *class struggle*." In contrast to the later Pabloite claim that "objective reality consists essentially of the capitalist regime and the Stalinist world," the 1948 document maintained, "The decisive force is the immense army of workers, of poor peasants and of colonial peoples."

Based on this perspective, the document argued passionately for the defense of the Yugoslav revolution on the basis of proletarian internationalism. Also of great significance is the manner in which the content of the proletarian dictatorship and the struggle for socialism is conceptualized, if only in outline form, in this letter. At this point in their political work, both Mandel and Pablo were still attempting to base their analysis of the problems of the Yugoslav revolution on the theoretical conquests of Lenin and Trotsky.

Theory had not yet been degraded to the extent that a regime which carried out extensive nationalizations and expropriations was automatically designated a workers' state. Emphasis was still placed on the *political forms* through which the dictatorship of the proletariat was realized and exercised.

Three weeks later, on August 3, 1948, the SWP Political Committee published its analysis of the Stalin-Tito split. The document effectively answers Banda's claim that the Fourth International did not "appreciate" the significance of the struggles unfolding in Yugoslavia and Eastern Europe.

In reality the Yugoslav events have brought a confirmation of Trotsky's analysis and prediction concerning the nature and ultimate fate of Stalinism, the most unstable and crisis-ridden regime in history. Stalinism lacks an independent class base of its own and, in protecting its own privileges and interests, it invariably comes into sharpest collision, in every sphere, with the interests and needs of the masses. The Stalinist regime is nothing else but a historical episode, a parasitic growth upon the workers' state, a specific form of the degeneration of the October Revolution, a product of the isolation of the proletarian revolution in a backward country....

The Yugoslav events provide definitive proof that the Kremlin's expansion, far from resolving the contradictions of Stalinism, actually projects beyond the Russian frontiers the internal contradictions which convulse the regime at home. No sooner are these contradictions of the Stalinist regime projected outwardly than they tend to assume their most aggravated forms....

The satellite countries are far from homogeneous. They have not eliminated the class struggle. From the economic standpoint, Yugoslavia does not differ radically from Romania, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria or Albania. If Yugoslavia differs from them at all, it is in having advanced furthest along the road toward destroying capitalism....

The most conscious proletarian elements in Yugoslavia, as in other satellite countries, are striving for a socialist solution. These socialist aspirations of the working class likewise run directly counter to the interests and policies of the Stalinist bureaucracy....

The peculiarity of Yugoslav developments has been such as to preclude the complete handpicking of puppets, along

the customary Stalinist pattern. Indeed, the Yugoslav Communist Party has undergone an independent development, even though in its internal regime and policies it hewed as closely as it could to its Russian prototype.

To cite two outstanding features of Yugoslav developments: 1. Unlike the native Russian bureaucracy or most of the other Stalinist leaderships in Europe, the Yugoslav CP actually led a successful civil war, applying class struggle methods, even if in a highly distorted form. 2. Under Tito, the leading Yugoslav cadres gained domination not with the aid of Russian bayonets, but through the mobilization of the Yugoslav masses around a program of social demands, in many instances of a revolutionary character.

This independent course of the Yugoslav development is one of the root sources of the long friction — and now the open break — between the Kremlin and Tito.

Revolutionists can only hail this development — this first rift in the ranks of world Stalinism which must unfold in open view of the world working class.

It is especially welcome to us because it throws into the full limelight the reactionary nature of Stalin's regime, illuminating it in a manner which can be most easily understood by workers throughout the world, and in particular by the militants who are in the ranks of the Stalinist parties everywhere.

It brings out of the shadows and into the light of day the terrible internal contradictions of the Kremlin regime which are bound to lead to its downfall.

What is more, it confronts the rank and file of the Yugoslav CP and of Stalinist parties elsewhere with the need of reexamining the ideas and methods of Stalinism. Having said A, they must go on to say B. That is to say, they are bound by the logic of the situation to review and reexamine the entire past history of Stalinism, in the first instance, and of the quarter of a century of the life-and-death struggle of Trotskyism against Stalinism....

The alternatives facing Yugoslavia, let alone the Tito regime, are to capitulate either to Washington or to the Kremlin — or to strike out on an independent road. This road can be only that of an Independent Workers and Peasants Socialist Yugoslavia, as the first step toward a Socialist Federation of the Balkan Nations. It can be achieved only through an appeal to and unity with the

international working class. That is to say, it can be achieved only by Yugoslavia's rallying to the banner of the European Socialist Revolution, and calling upon the international working class to aid her in the struggle against both the Kremlin oligarchy and American imperialism.

For revolutionists, however, it is not enough to welcome a great opportunity. This is only the beginning for the next step, namely their *seizing* the opportunity and intervening, above all, in order to raise the conscious level of the world working-class militants.

The logic of the Stalin-Tito struggle is such that it is bound to impel the militants in Yugoslavia and elsewhere — not to the right but to the left. This will happen independently of whether Tito himself moves to the right, or whether he seeks to straddle the fence somewhere between the Kremlin and imperialism.

But the precondition for how far the masses will move to the left lies not in their own wishes or their spontaneous movements but in how ably and effectively the conscious revolutionary vanguard, the world Trotskyists, will intervene as a dynamic factor into the situation.

To intervene effectively, we must BEGIN by patiently explaining the political meaning of the Stalin-Tito rift; we must lay bare the root causes of Stalinism, its origin, its reactionary nature, its naked brutality. In this way, by introducing the maximum of political clarity into the situation, revolutionists will be able to intervene most swiftly and effectively and help the militant workers and peasants in Yugoslavia.

Far more than Yugoslavia itself is involved here. The Yugoslav events are only a component part of the unfolding international crisis of Stalinism. This is evidenced by the tremors already produced in Stalinist parties the world over as a consequence of the Tito-Stalin rift. These repercussions are only the beginning...<sup>7</sup>

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## The Origins of Pabloism

The year 1948 was marked by major changes in the political and economic physiognomy of Eastern Europe which required a reexamination of the analysis which had been made by the Fourth International at its Second World Congress in April.

In response to the Cold War policies of US imperialism, spearheaded by the Marshall Plan, the Soviet bureaucracy was forced to implement radical anticapitalist policies in the "buffer states." In Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia and Poland, the nationalization of basic industry, the banking system, communications and transport was either totally or nearly completed. In Rumania, the statification of the means of production had already begun.

The Fourth International had to take these developments into account in defining the class nature of states whose social and economic structure were the product of the exceptional and peculiar circumstances which existed in the aftermath of World War II.

On the basis of agreements between Stalin and Anglo-American imperialism at Teheran, Yalta and Potsdam, Soviet hegemony in Eastern Europe was recognized in return for the Kremlin's assistance in strangling the revolutionary movement of the proletariat in France, Italy and Germany and in crushing the armed struggle of the Greek workers and peasants.

In Eastern Europe, the liquidation of private ownership of the means of production and the capitalist state apparatus had not been immediately carried out, despite the presence of Soviet occupation forces. Rather, until the end of 1947, the

Kremlin's actions indicated that it lacked any long-term perspective for the destruction of capitalism in the buffer states. In its economic policy, the Soviet bureaucracy was more concerned with utilizing the material assets of the buffer states than with nationalizing their productive forces. The native bourgeoisie was not expropriated and the nationalizations were limited to those concerns which had been seized by the workers at the end of the war.

As a reaction to the military and economic threat posed by the Marshall Plan, the Soviet bureaucracy began to take action against the Eastern European bourgeoisie. The implications of these developments, as well as those in Yugoslavia, were considered at the Seventh Plenum of the International Executive Committee of the Fourth International held in April 1949. While enumerating the chief features of the new turn in the policy of the Soviet bureaucracy — nationalization of heavy industry, the initiation of economic planning, and sanctions against the wealthiest layers of the peasantry — the IEC noted “the apathy and often the passive hostility of the proletariat towards the bureaucratic ‘planning’ efforts” and explained that this form of “‘planning’ retains its hybrid character and differs as yet structurally, in a fundamental way, from Soviet planning, which is itself the bureaucratic deformation of real socialist planning.”<sup>1</sup>

Analyzing the contradictory character of the Kremlin's actions in Eastern Europe, the IEC stated:

These variations in the politics of the bureaucracy do not correspond only to changes in the objective situation. Bureaucratic empiricism reflects, under the mask of immediate worries, the absence of historical perspectives and the impossibility of adopting a fundamental orientation. This in turn corresponds to the concrete relationship between the bureaucracy, the bourgeoisie, and the proletariat. Because it wanted first of all to strangle all possibility of a proletarian revolution, it was led to conclude a temporary compromise with the bourgeoisie; because its privileges are historically incompatible with the maintenance of the capitalist regime, it had to take the course of gradual and bureaucratic “liquidation” of the capitalist forces in the buffer zone.<sup>2</sup>

Attempting a more precise definition of the social character of the Eastern European states, the IEC stated that "it can be deduced that the buffer countries — aside from Finland and the Soviet-occupied zones in Germany and Austria — constitute today a unique type of hybrid transitional society in the process of transformation, with features that are as yet so fluid and lacking precision that it is extremely difficult to summarize its fundamental nature in a concise formula."<sup>3</sup>

The IEC maintained:

The fate of the buffer countries has not yet been decided, not alone in the historical sense as in the case of the USSR, but in a much more immediate sense. The totality of the present world political currents: The Marshall Plan, the relative "reconstruction" of Western Germany, American rearmament, the economic perspectives of American imperialism and of the Soviet Five-Year Plan, the development of the proletarian struggles and those of the colonial peoples — all these factors will decide in the coming months the immediate fate of the buffer countries.<sup>4</sup>

Summarizing the conclusions at which the Fourth International had arrived, the IEC declared, "This whole description leads to the conclusion that the buffer zone, except for Finland and the Russian-occupied zones in Austria and Germany, are on the road toward structural assimilation with the USSR, but that this assimilation has not yet been accomplished."<sup>5</sup>

In relation to Yugoslavia, the IEC took note of important differences in the origins of its state and its economic policies.

Yugoslavia, of all of the buffer countries, was the only one in which the liquidation of the bulk of the possessing classes, as well as the destruction of the bourgeois state apparatus, took place by means of *mass action*, that is, the guerrilla warfare which in this country took on the character of a genuine civil war. From this fundamental difference between Yugoslavia and the other buffer countries flow specific differences on a number of planes: The CP has a real base among the masses; the masses have a fundamentally different attitude to the new state; the Yugoslav CP has different relations toward the Soviet bureaucracy; there is the possibility of a real differentiation in the workers' movement following the Tito crisis, despite the undeniable existence of a police regime in this country. Even though



the sum of these factors does not eliminate any of the structural obstacles to real planning and for this reason leaves [the] Yugoslav economy as yet qualitatively different from the Russian economy, it undoubtedly brings this country closer, on the social and political plane, to the Soviet structure. The defense of Yugoslavia against the campaign of calumny, the economic blockade, etc., on the part of the Soviet bureaucracy must be considered within the framework of our evaluation of the workers' movement of this country, the origins of its state, and the revolutionary possibilities opened up as a consequence of this workers' movement and the origins of this state, which take precedence over purely economic considerations.<sup>6</sup>

The IEC's analysis concluded with a crucial point which was soon to come under attack within the Fourth International. But as late as April 1949, as it grappled with the objective significance of the developments in Eastern Europe, the IEC warned:

a. An evaluation of Stalinism cannot be made on the basis of localized results of its policy but must proceed from the entirety of its action on a world scale. When we consider the state of decay which capitalism presents even today, four years after the end of the war, and when we consider the concrete situation of 1943-45, there can be no doubt that Stalinism, on a world scale, appeared as the decisive factor in preventing a sudden and simultaneous crash of the capitalist order in Europe and in Asia. In this sense, the "successes" achieved by the bureaucracy in the buffer zone constitute, at most, the price which imperialism paid for services rendered on the world arena — a price which is moreover constantly called into question at the following stage.

b. From the world point of view, the reforms realized by the Soviet bureaucracy in the sense of an assimilation of the buffer zone to the USSR weigh incomparably less in the balance than the blows dealt by the Soviet bureaucracy, especially through its actions in the buffer zone, against the consciousness of the world *proletariat*, which it demoralizes, disorients and paralyzes by all its politics and thus renders it susceptible to some extent to the imperialist campaign of war preparations. Even from the point of view of the USSR itself, the defeats and the demoralization of the world proletariat caused by Stalinism constitute an incomparably

greater danger than the consolidation of the buffer zone constitutes a reinforcement.<sup>7</sup>

The Fourth International had not arrived at a completed definition of the character of the states in Eastern Europe. The use of such terms as "hybrid," "transitional" and "on the road toward structural assimilation" expressed the tentative, hypothetical, incomplete and inadequate character of the analyses. It was decided, therefore, to initiate a broader discussion on the question of the class nature of the "buffer countries."

The present-day impressionists and eclectics such as Banda — who have either forgotten all that they learned in the struggle against Pabloism or who, perhaps, have never seriously assimilated the theoretical lessons of that struggle — attempt to ridicule the caution with which the Fourth International approached these new social phenomena. They cannot understand why the Fourth International did not immediately proclaim the existence of workers' states in Eastern Europe once the statification of the means of production had been carried out. Proceeding as empiricists, they are entirely oblivious to the more subtle political, theoretical and ultimately practical implications of the definition of the "buffer countries" as workers' states.

But in 1949 the lessons of the struggle against Shachtman and Burnham were still fresh in the minds of all the principal leaders of the Fourth International. They still remembered Trotsky's warning: "Every sociological definition is at bottom a historical prognosis." What might simply begin as a somewhat abstract argument over terminology could at a certain point, under the pressure of class forces, become the point of departure for a fundamental revision of the entire historical perspective of the Trotskyist movement — and that was, in fact, what ultimately happened.

In the discussion on the nature of the states in Eastern Europe, the Fourth International was confronted with the question of the historical role of Stalinism. Through the military intervention of the Soviet bureaucracy, capitalist private ownership of the means of production had been abolished and a state monopoly of foreign trade had been established. Thus, the question was posed: did this represent

the liquidation of the capitalist state in Eastern Europe and the creation of a proletarian dictatorship, albeit deformed? For those who studied the question, there existed in the 1939-40 writings of Trotsky an invaluable point of reference: his analysis of the liquidation of capitalist relations in White Russia and eastern Poland as a result of the military intervention of the Red Army following the Stalin-Hitler Pact of August 1939.

But there existed not only similarities, but also important differences. Trotsky spoke of the expropriation of the large landowners and statification of the means of production "in the territories scheduled to become part of the USSR."<sup>8</sup>

In contrast, the states of Eastern Europe had not yet been "structurally assimilated" into the Soviet Union. (In fact, the national boundaries of the Eastern European states were never abolished.) Moreover, Trotsky had noted that in the territories occupied by the Soviet Union the bureaucracy had been compelled to give an "impulse" to the revolutionary expropriation of the masses. He declared that without an appeal to the independent activity of the masses, "it is impossible to constitute a new regime."<sup>9</sup>

But outside of Yugoslavia, the liquidation of capitalist property had not been accompanied by any significant form of independent mass action by the proletariat. And even there, the absence of genuine soviet-type forms of workers' power, the bureaucratic organization of the Tito leadership and the generally nationalist character of the policies pursued by the Yugoslav Communist Party raised theoretical questions which were bound up with the most fundamental issues of historical perspective.

Underlying the problem of a correct definition was an essential programmatic question: through what process is the dictatorship of the proletariat and the transition to socialism realized? Precisely on this issue, the relation between the sociological definition and the historical prognosis emerged most clearly. Considered within the context of the struggle of the Fourth International to resolve the crisis of revolutionary leadership within the working class, the question of the "correct" sociological definition was entirely secondary to the dangerous revisions in perspective and program that were

being smuggled into the movement in the course of the buffer state discussion. It eventually became clear that those like Pablo and Cochran (supported by Hansen) who placed central emphasis on determining the concrete empirical criteria upon which an adequate threshold definition of a workers' state could be based were operating, whether they knew it or not, with a hidden agenda.

In 1939-40 Trotsky, while opposing the demand that the Soviet bureaucracy be defined as a class, sought to establish whether or not the differences with the Burnham-Shachtman minority were merely of a terminological character. "What new political conclusions follow for us from these definitions?" he asked.

Given the fact that the Fourth International stood for the overthrow of the bureaucracy and insofar as the minority conceded that this revolution was bound up with the defense of existing nationalized property relations, then, even if they wished to call this revolution social rather than political, the differences with the majority would be merely of a terminological character. Thus, Trotsky wrote, "Were we to make them these terminological concessions, we would place our critics in a very difficult position, inasmuch as they themselves would not know what to do with their purely verbal victory."<sup>10</sup>

Of course, the dispute in 1939-40 was not merely over terminology. From its definition of the bureaucracy as a class, the minority proceeded to repudiate the unconditional defense of the USSR against imperialism. In 1949, the differences which arose over terminology did not so quickly disclose the programmatic differences. At first it appeared that the agreement on how to define the buffer states and Yugoslavia resolved the theoretical dispute. However, the deeper implications of the dispute then exploded in the form of a perspective that posed the physical liquidation of the Trotskyist movement.

Embedded deeply within all great theoretical disputes is the conflict of class forces. The "forms of appearance" generated by the postwar settlement seemed to indicate that Stalinism was more powerful than ever and that the Soviet bureaucracy was capable of playing a progressive historical

role despite all its past crimes. Trotsky warned that sharp changes in the political conjuncture often produce within the ranks of the revolutionary movement a relapse into petty-bourgeois forms of thought. Through such an uncritical adaptation to the outer appearance of political reality, the pressure of hostile class forces finds its most dangerous expression.

The development of the discussion between 1949 and 1951 reflected the deepening political crisis within the Fourth International, especially inside the Socialist Workers Party. The political differentiation which was emerging in the leadership of the SWP directly reflected fundamental changes in class relations within the United States produced by the institutionalization of "New Deal"-style class compromise and class collaboration, economically based on Keynesian deficit spending. The evolution of this interconnected process of political and theoretical crisis within the Fourth International and the SWP must be carefully studied.

Among the first to insist that the Fourth International should recognize the existence of workers' states in Eastern Europe was Bert Cochran (E.R. Frank), who submitted a memorandum in March 1949 arguing that the statification of the productive forces had produced in the buffer states economic and political regimes which were "roughly similar to that of the USSR."<sup>11</sup>

At a political committee of the SWP held on July 12, 1949, Morris Stein introduced the discussion on the above-quoted resolution that had been produced at the seventh plenum. His report consisted largely of a recapitulation of that document. In the course of the meeting, Cochran argued along the lines of his memorandum. The discussion was resumed on August 2, 1949, at which Stein elaborated on the differences which existed within the Fourth International and the SWP.

In my presentation of the resolution on the Eastern European countries at the last meeting, I failed to deal with the position of the British RCP. I will speak on it briefly now. I haven't read their latest documents, but this is of little importance, since their position dates back some sixteen months. Already then they declared that the buffer

countries are workers states. As a matter of fact, they have a similar position today on China. They proceed from the concept that Stalinism in power equals a workers state. When they first took their position that the buffer countries were workers' states, these countries had not yet undergone any extensive nationalizations. In a sense their method of reasoning is similar to that of the Shachtmanites, even though they arrive at opposite conclusions.

To the Shachtmanites, Stalinists in control of the State equals bureaucratic collectivism, that is, a new social class is born as soon as the Stalinists gain state power. To the RCP, Stalinist control of state power also amounts to an automatic social change but they term it a workers' state. It is a convenient method which absolves its practitioners of all responsibility for analysis of the concrete living processes.

It is noteworthy from [this] point of view that [the] only serious analysis of the evolution in the buffer countries has been made by the majority tendency in the International. By trying to simplify the problem of buffer countries, the RCP on the contrary complicates this problem and brings into question all the ideological positions of Trotskyism.

If Stalinism in power means workers states, then what is the role of the Fourth International? What happens to the Marxist concept of the state?

Within the RCP several tendencies have been emerging which are fed precisely by these contradictions in their position on the Eastern European countries. One of their leading members, for example, concluded that if Stalinism is such a revolutionary force, we may as well join the CP. Others question the existence of the Fourth International, claiming it was formed prematurely.

Now let us take up some of the arguments that entered our last discussion. I was amazed by Cochran's approach to the question. I was amazed by the manner in which he brushes aside what I consider to be fundamental questions. For example, he agrees that agriculture in the buffer countries remains in private hands, is exploited privately. But that, he tells us, isn't too important. He makes no attempt to analyze why it isn't important. He simply dismisses it.

The IEC resolution poses the question of the national boundaries and their reactionary role. It demonstrates the

impossibility of planning within the confines of small national states. But he dismisses that too. Why?<sup>12</sup>

Cochran defended his position, insisting that the decisive issue in deciding the character of the European states was neither their historical origins nor the absence of a mass revolutionary movement of the working class — but the fact that state ownership had been established over industry. He argued that the “sociological similarities” between Eastern Europe and the USSR were so great that they outweighed the difference in their historical origins.

Cochran then dealt with what he believed to be the underlying significance of the discussion.

Behind all these arguments [against the existence of workers' states in Eastern Europe] lurks the fear that by admitting that a state like Czechoslovakia or Yugoslavia is sociologically similar to the USSR, we are endowing Stalinism with a progressive mission, and if Stalinism has a progressive mission, doesn't that call for a reconsideration of the role of the Fourth International.

If you think about this you will see that the problem really rests on an entirely different plane from the discussion that has occupied us this evening. I would say this. If we thought that Stalinism could accomplish in the world, in America, in Western Europe, what it accomplished in Czechoslovakia and Poland; call it what you will — capitalist, neo-capitalist, in-between state — apply any definition you please to it — if Stalinism could do in America by its methods what it accomplished in Czechoslovakia, then I think it would follow that Stalinism is the new wave of the future which is destined to usher in the new society.<sup>13</sup>

Cochran had hit the nail on the head: the discussion was not really about sociological definitions, but concerned the historical prognoses and tasks of the Fourth International. Cochran hastened to insist that he believed that Stalinism could not achieve in the United States and Western Europe what it had done in the buffer states; and “Therefore, Stalinism is historically bankrupt. Our fundamental analysis of it remains.”<sup>14</sup>

Cochran's position was immediately challenged by Clarke, who was to become the strongest proponent of Pablo's revisionist views inside the SWP. Clarke's political evolution

illustrates the impact of objective class forces upon the cadre of the revolutionary movement, which often produces transformations in "individual" positions that are sudden and unexpected. Warning that Cochran's views would lead to the conclusion that Stalinism plays a progressive role, Clarke suggested that the SWP "should be wary of finding some pat formula in determining the character of these states, particularly in view of the world crisis and the struggle that exists elsewhere in the world."<sup>15</sup>

Cannon then intervened in the discussion:

I don't think that you can change the class character of a state by manipulation at the top. It can only be done by revolution which is followed by [a] fundamental change in property relations. That is what I understand by a change of the class character of [the] state. That is what happened in the Soviet Union. The workers first took power and began the transformation of property relations....

I don't think there has been a social revolution in the buffer countries and I don't think Stalinism carried out a revolution. My opinion of the situation is that a tremendous revolutionary movement was indicated by the situation toward the end of the war with the victories of the Red Army, and that the instinctive movement of the masses was to carry through, sweep away capitalism, workers take power and immediately unite themselves with the Soviet Union or Federate the Balkan states and create a sufficient arena for socialist planning.

I think the role of Stalinism is not revolutionary at all. It gave an impulse to the revolution in this sense, that the victories of the Red Army stimulated the revolutionary movement. But the actual role of Stalinism was to strangle that revolution, to suppress the mass movement of the workers and to restabilize the capitalist state and capitalist property relations....

If you once begin to play with the idea that class character of a state can be changed by manipulations in top circles, you open the door to all kinds of revision of basic theory. I believe the buffer countries not only can return to the capitalist orbit, but the chances are that they will, unless the situation is altered by a revolutionary movement in Europe.

I regard these states as pawns at the present time between two powers — Western capitalism and the Soviet



Union. It is quite conceivable that a deal in the cold war could be the starting point for a loosening of Stalinist control of the state apparatus in these countries and gradual reinfiltration of bonafide capitalist representatives. Whether I am correct in saying that such a development is probable, doesn't alter the situation. If you admit that it is possible, then you have to take the position that the class character of the state can be switched back and forth without revolution or counter-revolution. It is that idea, carried to the extreme, that some people are playing with; the idea that perhaps England can gradually nationalize the mines, banks, steel, and other industries and thus creep up on socialism without a revolution. We have always considered that reformist.

One thing is absolutely certain: what is there now cannot remain. That it is transitory, everybody agrees.... In the meantime you have to recognize them as transitory formations where there has been no social revolution, but rather an aborted revolution, and let it go at that for the present. It is too early to make a final characterization.

I agree with the point that Clarke made about the Soviet Union, that nationalization plus the foreign trade, is not the *criterion* of a workers state. That is what *remains* of [a] workers state created by the Russian Revolution. That is the remnants of the Russian Revolution. That is why the Soviet state is called "degenerate."

There is a tremendous difference whether a state has nationalized property relations as a result of a proletarian revolution, or whether there are certain progressive moves toward nationalization, by the Stalinists in one case or by English reformists in the other.<sup>16</sup>

In his summary of the discussion, Stein declared, "I am not clear in my own mind yet as to the real nature of differences here."<sup>17</sup>

But it was becoming clear that differences of a fundamental character existed within the Fourth International. In September 1949, Pablo wrote an article in which, while advocating the designation of Yugoslavia as a "workers' state deformed from its birth," he produced an embryonic exposition of an entirely new perspective:

Socialism, as the ideological and political movement of the proletariat as well as a social system, is by nature

*international and indivisible.* This idea is at the foundation of our movement and the only one on which can be built the conscious mass movement which will assure the socialist development of humanity.

But while bearing this in mind, it nevertheless remains true that in the whole historic period of the transition from capitalism to socialism, a period which can extend for centuries, we shall encounter a much more tortuous and complicated development of the revolution than our teachers foresaw — and workers' states that are not normal but necessarily quite deformed.<sup>18</sup> (Emphasis added.)

In the heat of the faction fight in 1953, Cannon asserted that he had never accepted Pablo's conception of centuries of deformed workers' states. This claim is substantiated by a public speech which Cannon gave on November 4, 1949, on the thirty-second anniversary of the Russian Revolution, entitled "The Trend of the Twentieth Century." It is impossible to study this speech without concluding that it was a direct reply to the perspective elaborated by Pablo in his September document.

Cannon reviewed the history of revisionist attacks upon the revolutionary perspective of Marxism, which established the historical bankruptcy of capitalism and the revolutionary role of the international working class. Cannon noted how in the late nineteenth century, in the midst of economic prosperity, "the ideologists of triumphant capitalism had a field day celebrating the refutation of the Marxist prophecy."<sup>19</sup>

He explained how these conceptions, which became the ideological foundation for reformism in the labor movement, were shattered by the outbreak of World War I and the Russian Revolution, which produced the greatest vindication of Marxism. Cannon went on to trace the material and ideological origins of Stalinism and its theory of "socialism in one country," which, "signified a renunciation of the perspective of international revolution; the recognition and expectation of the permanent existence of capitalism in five-sixths of the world, and the willingness of the Soviet bureaucracy to adapt themselves to it and live with it."<sup>20</sup>

This conception was, Cannon insisted, no less false than the original revisionism of Bernstein, and was shattered by the explosive revolutionary struggles and economic crises of the late 1920s and 1930s. But the revolutionary possibilities of the 1930s were betrayed and produced a series of catastrophic defeats.

The terrible experiences of Stalinism and fascism, and the Second World War, and all that led to them and followed from them, changed many things, disappointed many expectations, and raised new problems for theoretical investigation. Once again new phenomena, unforeseen by people who notice only what is immediately before their eyes and always imagine that it will last forever, produced a crop of superficial impressions masquerading as worked-out theories.<sup>21</sup>

Cannon poured scorn on those who proclaimed that fascism was the wave of the future.

Out of the dark pool of their own fears and terrors, these panic-mongers fished up the so-called theory of "retrogressionism." They announced that the historic process is definitely moving backward toward barbarism, not forward toward socialism. But this capitulatory pessimism was just as worthless as the delighted optimism of a section of the capitalists in providing a real appraisal of the role and prospects of fascism....

Hitler and Mussolini, in their boasts and pretensions, and also in their ultimate fate, stand out in history as representative symbols of all fascist dictators who may yet make their brief appearance in one country or another. Hitler, at the height of his madness, boasted that his Nazi regime would last for a thousand years. But he had to settle for a mere twelve years, and then throw his own head into the bargain with the ignominious collapse of his regime. Mussolini, strutting on the Roman balcony, impressed many people as an impervious superman. But his regime fell apart "like a rotten apple" after a mere twenty years. And Mussolini himself ended upside down, hanging by his heels in the public square like a slaughtered pig in a butcher shop. There was poetic justice, as well as prophecy, in the ignominious end of the two fascist supermen.<sup>22</sup>

Cannon then turned his attention to the role of the Soviet bureaucracy.

The fate of the Stalinist criminals will be no more glorious. The world-conquering historical mission ascribed to Stalinism by frightened Philistines and professional pessimists is no less chimerical than that formerly attributed to fascism. At the moment of its apparently greatest triumph of expansion, Stalinism has been overtaken by a mortal crisis. The revolt of Yugoslavia, which is already spreading like a virulent infection throughout the Stalinist domain in Eastern Europe — and tomorrow will spread to China — heralds the death sentence of history on the right of Stalinism to expand or even to survive as anything but a horrible interlude in the march of humanity.

Humanity is marching forward to socialism and freedom, not backward to barbarism and slavery. Neither fascism nor Stalinism has any historical right to stand in the way.... Stalinism is a degenerate growth of the labor movement — the product of undue retardation and delay of the proletarian revolution after all the conditions for it have become rotten-ripe. Neither fascism nor Stalinism represents “the wave of the future.” Both are reactionary and transitory phenomena. Neither fascism nor Stalinism represents the main line of historical development. On the contrary, they are deviations from it, which must and will be obliterated in the next tidal wave of colonial uprisings and proletarian revolutions.<sup>23</sup>

By way of answering Banda’s claim that the Fourth International “failed to appreciate” not only the developments in Eastern Europe and Yugoslavia but those in Vietnam and China as well, let us quote from the concluding sections of Cannon’s remarkable speech:

The unparalleled upsurges of the colonial masses, which came in the wake of the war, have revealed the startling weakness of the Western imperialist powers and their inability to maintain and secure their colonial domination anymore. The doom of Western imperialism is clearly written in the flaming skies of the Orient. Outlived capitalism has no secure future anywhere.

The workers of Europe had their second chance for revolution in the immediate postwar period, and in the main they were ready for it. They failed of this objective once again only because they still lacked a sufficiently influential revolutionary party to organize and lead the struggle. The conclusion to be drawn from this is not to write

off the revolution, but to build a revolutionary party to organize it and lead it. That's what we're here for.

The perspective of the coming years, as we read it in the course of events as they have transpired in the half-century behind us, is that of a continuing crisis and increasing weakness of bankrupt capitalism; of new colonial uprisings on an ever-vaster scale; of more strikes and class battles in the main countries of capitalism. In the course of these struggles the workers will learn the most necessary lessons from their own experiences. They will settle accounts with perfidious Stalinism and social democracy and drive them out of the workers' movement. They will forge revolutionary parties worthy of the century of blood and iron. And these parties will organize their struggles and lead them to their revolutionary goal....

That is the supreme task assigned by history to the twentieth century, and it will be accomplished. The work is in progress, and the goal is in sight. The first half of the twentieth century saw the beginning of the necessary social transformation of the world. The second half of the twentieth century will see it carried through to a triumphant conclusion. Socialism will win the world and change the world, and make it safe for peace and freedom.<sup>24</sup>

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## The Metaphysics of Nationalized Property

In reviewing the history of the “buffer states” discussion, it should be noted that among those who originally disagreed most vociferously with placing central emphasis on nationalized property relations as the chief criteria of a workers’ state was Ernest Mandel (German).

In a document written in October 1949 and published the following January, he insisted that the decisive question for Marxists in defining the class character of a state was not this or that economic measure instituted by a new regime — no matter how apparently radical — but its historical and political origins. Furthermore, Mandel stressed that for Marxists, the smashing of the capitalist state had not merely a negative, but a positive content — that is, it implied the creation of a new state apparatus based on the revolutionary proletariat.

Mandel raised crucial theoretical questions that were anathema to those like Pablo, Cochran and Joseph Hansen who, beneath the guise of correct “sociological” definitions, were working toward a wholesale rejection of Marxist principles and an abandonment of the historical perspective of the Fourth International.

The most important section of Mandel’s document was entitled “The Metaphysics of Nationalized Property.” He recalled that in 1948, the Johnson-Forrest tendency had attempted to attribute to the Fourth International the

position that a workers' state is brought into existence merely through the nationalization of the means of production.

We immediately refuted this absurd accusation. We said that only the nationalization of the means of production *resulting from the proletarian revolution* was a criterion for the existence of a workers' state.

Only if one considers the economic transformations produced by the October Revolution in their entirety has one the right to consider *for the USSR* such formulas as "mode of production," "relations of production" and "property relations" as three equivalent formulas expressing the *existence of the proletarian revolution* on the economic, social and juridical arena respectively. But it does not at all follow that *any nationalized property whatever* is to be identified with a non-capitalist mode of production and therefore with a revolution in the productive relationships.

Such a conception would in fact be "economist," that is, a serious phenomenological deviation from Marxism. But that was never Trotsky's conception or that of the present majority of the Fourth International.

Today the comrades of the RCP [then led by Jock Haston] and several comrades who favor the theory of the working class character of the Yugoslav state revive the accusation of the Johnson-Forrest comrades against us in an inverse sense: they accuse us of having abandoned Trotsky's conception which, according to them, identified nationalized property with the workers' state.

Naturally, by applying themselves to the task they can find here or there in Trotsky's articles ambiguous formulas which can be interpreted in an "economist" sense. But these formulas have exactly as much value as certain quotations from Lenin concerning the possibility of "the victory of Socialism in Russia" which are presented uncritically by the Stalinists.

What is involved in both cases are not systematic theoretical expositions of the question but elliptical formulations in polemical articles whose real significance cannot be understood without considering them in context. *On the whole* in his theoretical writings, dealing especially with this question, Trotsky shows a preference for the formula "nationalized property established by the revolution" whose meaning has been clarified above....

Considering all these factors we define as *metaphysical* the reasoning of comrades who say: Yugoslavia (and most of the buffer zone countries) are workers' states because industry and wholesale trade is almost completely nationalized. In effect these comrades make an abstraction of decisive factors in estimating the *character* of these nationalizations: who instituted them, when, in whose benefit, and under what conditions.

They isolate a historic factor from its context and reduce what should be a profound historical analysis to a simple syllogism, in fact to a tautology and to a begging of the question. For in saying that Yugoslavia is a workers' state because industrial property is nationalized, they *presuppose* that these nationalizations are *workers'* nationalizations, that is to say they presuppose what they have to prove....<sup>1</sup>

Mandel noted the contradictions into which those who placed a one-sided emphasis on the fact of state ownership inevitably find themselves:

In our epoch when capitalist society is decomposing and the proletarian revolution is considerably delayed, we are confronted by *transitional cases*, cases of *combined development* in which the property relations can be overturned without the economy thereby automatically becoming an economy orienting away from capitalism toward socialism and without permitting us to conclude that what we have is a workers' state.

A striking example is given by the Popular Republic of Outer Mongolia. This country is the first example of a country treated like those of the buffer zone of the USSR. It has a constitution faithfully modeled on that of the Soviet Union. A quasi-complete statification of the means of production and exchange has been proclaimed and undoubtedly realized there.

But it is impossible to designate Outer Mongolia as a "workers' state" for the simple reason that neither a proletariat, a bourgeoisie or even a numerous class of agricultural proprietors exists or has ever existed, and almost the entire population consists of nomadic shepherds. The mode of production is much closer to primitive communism than to modern socialism. Nevertheless, we find there the most advanced property relations in the world.



*Combined development* has thus given to all metaphysicians a brilliant lesson they would do well not to forget when they study the transitional society of the buffer countries....

But we have more recent examples of nationalizations: Burma and Czechoslovakia. Burma displayed the decision, ever since the proclamation of independence, to set up a regime of statification of the means of industrial production, the land and the banks. In fact, Burma has been given a constitution *copied after the Yugoslav Constitution*, declaring that all the wealth of the land and its subsoil, all the industries and all the banks belong to the people. Would there be anyone among us who would designate Burma on this account a "workers' state" (Moreover, it is interesting to note that the Burmese Constitution also declares that power emanates from the Peoples' Committees. It is time to understand that words and formerly clear formulas have alas! today been filled with a content which varies according to those who use them)....<sup>2</sup>

Arguing that these examples demonstrate that the statification of the means of production can be carried out by states which are clearly not of a proletarian character, Mandel then came to his central point:

According to the Marxist-Leninist theory of the state, the transition from the bourgeois state to the workers' state can only come about by means of the *violent destruction* of the bourgeois state apparatus and the establishment of a new type of state apparatus, the apparatus of a workers' state. The partisans of the theory of the working class nature of the buffer states have quietly dropped this whole fundamental part of Marxist theory, without giving the slightest explanation as to why they have abandoned it.<sup>3</sup>

Mandel warned that the historical prognosis latent in the positions of those who were arguing on behalf of the proletarian character of the buffer states was

a perspective of the possibility of a growth and increasing development of Stalinism on an international scale in the years and decades to come!...

Up to now, we have justified our entire attitude toward Stalinism by judging its activity from *the standpoint of the world revolution*. We have never abandoned the criteria of historical materialism which consists in judging modes of

production by their capacity for developing the productive forces.

We have never condemned Stalinism from an abstract moralistic point of view. We have based our entire judgment upon the *incapacity* of Stalinist methods to effect the *world* overthrow of capitalism. We have explained that the shameful methods employed by the Kremlin cannot promote but only serve to impede the cause of the world revolution.

We have explained the impossibility of overturning capitalism on a global scale "by any means whatsoever" when there is only one method to apply: that of the revolutionary mobilization of the *proletarian masses* through their organs of *proletarian democracy*. And we have appraised — and condemned — the structural assimilation of this or that province or small country into the USSR precisely from this point of view, by saying: what counts today is not the expropriation of the bourgeoisie on *small bits of territory* but the *world* destruction of the capitalist regime; and, so far as this *world* destruction is concerned, the lowering of the workers' consciousness, the demoralization and destruction produced on a *world scale* by the crimes of Stalinism are infinitely heavier in their consequences than these few isolated "successes."

Obviously the hypothesis of the destruction of capitalism, not in Estonia or in Roumania or even Poland, *but in all Europe and the greater part of Asia* would transform our attitude toward Stalinism from top to bottom. The destruction of capitalism among more than half of humanity, embracing all the important countries of the world except for the United States, would radically change the balance of historical advantages and disadvantages of Stalinist activity. OUR CRITERION OF STALINISM FROM THE STANDPOINT OF ITS INEFFECTIVENESS AGAINST CAPITALISM WOULD LOSE ALL ITS MEANING....

The comrades adhering to the theory of the proletarian character of the buffer countries are far from envisaging this eventuality, but it would be the logical conclusion of the road on which they have embarked and would oblige us to revise *from top to bottom* our historical appraisal of Stalinism. We would then have to examine the reasons why the proletariat has been incapable of destroying capitalism on such extensive territories where the bureaucracy has successfully achieved this task.

We would also have to specify, as certain comrades of the RCP have already done, that the historical mission of the proletariat will not be the destruction of capitalism but rather that of building socialism, a task which the bureaucracy by its very nature cannot solve. We would then have to repudiate the entire Trotskyist argument against Stalinism since 1924, a line of argument based on the *inevitable* destruction of the USSR by *imperialism* in the event of an extremely prolonged postponement of the world revolution.

Even today, certain comrades explain that "the destruction of Stalinism will come about by its extension." All these revisions of Trotskyism would be *perfectly justified* if they corresponded to the facts, BUT IT IS NECESSARY TO HAVE THE COURAGE TO FOLLOW THROUGH THIS LINE OF THINKING TO THE END AND TO FORMULATE THE CONCLUSIONS IMPOSED BY THE FACTS!<sup>4</sup>

In the early part of 1950, the majority of the SWP Political Committee indicated its agreement with Mandel and again expressed reservations about the implications of the buffer states discussion. In February, at a plenary session of the SWP National Committee, Morris Stein once again reviewed the development of the discussion:

Let us therefore start with this question of: What are the criteria for a workers state? In Marxist theory and in historical experience, we know of only one way in which a workers state can come into existence — by way of the proletarian revolution. That is, the proletariat, through its independent mass action and guided by the revolutionary party, is the only force in modern society able to abolish capitalist rule and construct a workers state.

We know also, from theory, and one might add a century of Marxist practice, that the bourgeois state cannot be reformed into a workers state, but it and all its institutions must be abolished. And only then, can it be replaced by a workers state and its specific ruling organs....

Purely economic criteria for establishing the existence or non-existence of the workers state have figured in our movement only in discussing the degeneration of a workers state previously established by a proletarian revolution....

In brief, the most important element in the social revolution is the consciousness and self-action of the

working class as expressed in the policy of its vanguard party.<sup>5</sup>

Stein took exception to the arguments of Hansen, whose main contribution to the discussion was his insistence that statification of the productive forces was the essential criteria for establishing the existence of a workers' state.

It seems to me that it is Comrade Hansen and not Germain who needs enlightenment — not on planning — but on the difference between a workers state arising from a proletarian revolution and this process of structural assimilation, or incorporation, of countries which the Stalinist bureaucracy is now trying to carry through as a substitute for proletarian revolution....

The minority will be wasting its shots if it continues to fire away at planning as a criterion for a workers state; or at dependence on the world market; or at the capitalist nature of agriculture in the buffer countries, and so on. We readily grant all these points and even go a step further and say that the immediate nationalization of industry is not necessarily a criterion for a workers state either — provided the regime in the country is that of workers' power arising from a proletarian revolution....

They are fully aware, for example, that the origin of the Soviet Union in the October Revolution is an inseparable part of our definition of the Soviet Union as a degenerated workers state. They have tried to overcome this difficulty in two ways, both equally dangerous. On the one hand, some of them try to minimize the importance of origin. This is very dangerous because such a course can only lead them into the trap of "bureaucratic revolution." That would be the unavoidable conclusion of such an argument pursued to its logical end.<sup>6</sup>

Stein concluded:

The simplified approach which reduces itself in essence to the proposition: nationalization equals workers state, can only disorient our movement. It is a caricature of Marxism. It substitutes bureaucratic nationalization decrees for a real analysis of the living class forces and their relative position within society. Such an approach cannot conceivably serve us either as a guide to understanding the events transpiring in the buffer countries or as an aid in shaping our policy toward them.

Nationalization of industry, important as it is, can be considered as only one field in which the bourgeoisie has been compelled to surrender its decisive positions. But the bourgeoisie still has, as I mentioned earlier, considerable strength in society. Not the least of these is the fact that the agricultural relations remain capitalist, and that the bourgeoisie permeates all the institutions of the state, nationalized industry included.<sup>7</sup>

The importance of the arguments of Mandel and Stein were that they correctly placed central emphasis on the historical perspective of proletarian revolution against a growing current of opportunist adaptation to the Soviet bureaucracy and its ephemeral "successes." This does not mean, however, that the eventual decision to acknowledge the existence of "deformed" workers' states in Yugoslavia and the rest of Eastern Europe was wrong. When properly understood and properly used, this new definition fulfilled a necessary theoretical and political function. But as with all dialectical concepts, that of a "deformed workers' state" is acceptable and retains its validity only within a given historical and political "tolerance."

That is, as a means of defining the "hybrid" states which came into being under the specific and peculiar conditions of the postwar period and of emphasizing the distorted and abnormal character of their origins, the concept of a *deformed* workers' state establishes the principled basis upon which the Trotskyist movement asserts the necessity of defending these states against imperialist intervention, while at the same time clearly indicating the political tasks that confront the working class within these countries.

The use of the term *deformed* places central attention upon the crucial historical difference between the overthrow of the capitalist state in October 1917 and the overturns which occurred in the late 1940s in Eastern Europe — that is, the absence of the mass organs of proletarian power, Soviets, led by a Bolshevik-type party. Moreover, the term itself implies the merely transitory existence of state regimes of dubious historical viability, whose actions in every sphere — political and economic — bear the stamp of the distorted and abnormal character of their birth.

Thus, far from associating such regimes with new historical vistas, the designation *deformed* underscores the historical bankruptcy of Stalinism and points imperiously to the necessity for the building of a genuine Marxist leadership, the mobilization of the working class against the ruling bureaucracy in a political revolution, the creation of genuine organs of workers' power, and the destruction of the countless surviving vestiges of the old capitalist relations within the state structure and economy.

However, the ambiguity of the new definition provided an opening which opportunists were quick to exploit. Within the Fourth International, the use of the term "deformed" was being treated as if it were no more than a sort of adjectival afterthought. Rather than being seen as a historical mutation, produced under peculiar and exceptional conditions which were bound up with the unresolved crisis of proletarian revolutionary leadership, the theory of the deformed workers' states was being transformed into the starting point for an entirely revisionist perspective.

In effect, the "dialectical tolerance" of the concept was violated in order to present such deformed states as the social and political prototypes of future regimes! As this was being done, the essential universal forms of the workers' states which had been revealed in the Paris Commune of 1871 and the Soviet power created by the October 1917 Revolution were downgraded to simply abstract theoretical norms of no special doctrinal and programmatic consequence.

The proletarian revolution — understood as the armed uprising of the working class, supported by the oppressed masses, led by its own Marxist party and culminating in the establishment of the dictatorship of the class realized through definite state forms — was no longer seen as the historical premise of a workers' state.

Hansen put the matter most crudely:

One of the easiest errors to slip into when considering this question [What is a workers' state?] is to make a kind of fetish of the category "workers' state." All of us tend to think of it as something glorious that arose to put an end to the blood and filth of capitalism. To this day an aura surrounds the words "workers' state" because of all the

associations with Lenin and Trotsky and the great emancipating struggle they led. We therefore find difficulty connecting it with anything base, and even when we insist on its degeneration in the USSR a brightness still clings to it. We want it to be something noble and great and inspiring.<sup>8</sup>

If taken to its logical conclusion, as it eventually was by the SWP in the 1960s, Hansen's argument led inexorably to the separation of the socialist perspective from its proletarian and revolutionary base. For Hansen, the term "workers' state" provided a bridge to the complete repudiation of the scientific Marxist conception that socialism is the historical product of conscious struggle of the international working class. The crass pragmatism which underlay Hansen's arguments came out most clearly in his insistence that the analysis of the buffer states in Eastern Europe had to be carried out on a country by country basis: a method which excluded any serious theoretical evaluation of the historical process manifested in Eastern Europe, its relation to the international class struggle, its place in the development of the world revolution and its broad political implications for the Fourth International.

Moreover, Hansen's suggestion that the Fourth International was reluctant to credit Stalinism with having created new workers' states because of sentimental considerations recalled earlier and equally vulgar arguments by various petty-bourgeois intellectuals in the 1930s that Trotsky maintained that the USSR remained a workers' state because of a psychological inability to recognize that nothing was left of the 1917 Revolution. Hansen's method of reasoning was so backward and superficial that he could not understand that at issue in the debate over the class nature of the Eastern European states was not a fetishistic preoccupation with abstract norms, but the most fundamental question of all: the historical role of the working class as the gravedigger of capitalism and the builder of a world socialist society.

In April 1950, at the eighth session of executive committee of the Fourth International, it was officially decided to designate Yugoslavia a deformed workers' state. (Mandel had, in the meantime, slipped his old positions back into his

briefcase and was soon to forget all about them.) More significant than the actual definition, from the standpoint of the development of the Fourth International, was the manner in which it was justified. In proclaiming that a workers' state had been established in Yugoslavia, Pablo and Mandel lavished extravagant praise upon the Tito leadership.

It was openly suggested that the crisis of leadership was being resolved in Belgrade, that the Yugoslav CP was "ridding itself of the last ideological vestiges of Stalinism" and that the Titoites were preparing "the regrouping of revolutionary forces on an international scale," facilitating "the organization of the new Communist opposition arising in the Stalinist parties and with which it is possible to envisage the construction in the near future of revolutionary Marxist formations for an entire series of countries."<sup>9</sup>

As the SWP prepared to go along with the executive committee, there was a farsighted and perceptive dissenter — John G. Wright, the one authentic Marxist theoretician within the American movement who had been Trotsky's closest intellectual collaborator during the late 1930s. He was troubled by the political drift that was ever more apparent within the Fourth International. In a memorandum written in May 1950, Wright made the following warning:

The developments in Yugoslavia have been and continue to be of a transitional and intermediate character and do not allow of such a definitive formulation as the one accepted by the majority.

The formulation adopted is virtually word for word Lenin's own definition of Soviet Russia as it emerged from the October revolution, that is "a workers' state with bureaucratic deformations." It is premature to define Yugoslavia so categorically and sweepingly.

In the Soviet Republic under Lenin and Trotsky there could be no question whatever of the passage of state power from the hands of the bourgeoisie into the hands of the working class and of the installation of a new type of state, a new social order, with new organs of state power truly proletarian in character. It is not correct to say that the same is already the case with Yugoslavia.

It is inadvisable from the standpoint of our theory, nor is it necessary from the standpoint of the most effective and



correct intervention in the unfolding Yugoslav revolution. On the contrary, it may provide a theoretical trap and under certain conditions lead to dangerous consequences.

In the recent period the Yugoslav party and its leadership on the whole have been taking big strides *toward* completing the Yugoslav revolution. They are now moving to the left more rapidly than at any time since the 1948 break with the Cominform. From many indications it is quite possible that the evolution of the Yugoslav CP and of Yugoslavia itself may proceed in a relatively peaceful manner to the actual construction of a workers' state and the conversion of the party into a genuine Leninist, that is, Trotskyist party.

They may go all the way. This is and must be the goal of all our efforts. But this cannot be assumed in advance. There is a real danger that this our goal, and the Trotskyist intervention as a whole, may be obscured by a standpoint which declares as already achieved something whose attainment still lies in the future and which can come only as the result of conscious political action and struggle....

In other words, the genuine organs of workers power, the freely elected Soviets and mass organizations are yet to appear, the working class itself, above all, its self-acting vanguard organized in the revolutionary party, is still in a formative process.

This situation is neither a mere shortcoming, a "deformation" nor a coincidence. Historical results can never be superior to the policies that produced them. Nor is the issue merely one of a desirable "reform." It goes far deeper than that.

If the actual leap has not yet been accomplished but still lies in the future, it means, for one thing, that most critical period *internally* lies ahead and not behind for the Yugoslav leadership, the Yugoslav party and the country itself. In fact, this critical period may be precisely the one through which Yugoslavia is now passing.

If the main organs of proletarian power — *the Soviets* — do not appear in the period immediately ahead, if the mass organizations are not soon permitted the *maximum* of self-action, initiative and proletarian democracy, then a process in the opposite direction may readily and even rapidly set in and decide Yugoslavia's fate in just the opposite sense from the one indicated by the majority.

This variant of development is left out completely by the majority formulation. This should be corrected.

One of the guarantees of the completion of the Yugoslav revolution is not only what the Yugoslav leaders and party say and do; it is also what the world Trotskyist movement says and does. One of the chief shortcomings of the Yugoslav movement has been its tendency to draw more or less definitive theoretical and political conclusions from episodic, conjunctural and intermediate situations. This dictates all the greater caution by the Trotskyists in drawing their own theoretical and political conclusions.

The revolutionary weight and potential of the Yugoslav developments is fully taken into account by the standpoint that Yugoslavia is not yet a workers' state, that the Yugoslav revolution, precisely because it *is not yet completed*, is unfolding along the only road that it can take in order to survive, and that is to really establish in Yugoslavia what was really established in the Soviet Union under Lenin and Trotsky.<sup>10</sup>

Little more than a month after these lines were written, the misplaced confidence of Pablo and Mandel in the "remarkable qualities" of the Tito leadership was glaringly exposed by the outbreak of the Korean War. In a crucial vote inside the United Nations which provided the pretext for imperialist intervention, Yugoslavia abstained, thus taking the very path against which the Fourth International had warned in July 1948, that of maneuvering between imperialism and the Soviet bureaucracy, rather than the path which the FI had urged — of world socialist revolution.

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## The Nature of Pabloite Opportunism

By 1951, the year of the Third Congress, a powerful liquidationist tendency had entrenched itself within the Fourth International. What had originally begun as a discussion on the class nature of Yugoslavia and the Eastern European buffer states had become transformed, under the pressure of alien class forces, into a political platform for sweeping opportunist revisions of the basic Trotskyist program and its historical perspective.

The theories advanced by Pablo of “generations of deformed workers’ states” and “war-revolution” articulated the pessimism and demoralization of broad layers of the Fourth International beneath the impact of unfavorable objective conditions. The political conceptions which were to become known as Pabloism emerged as an adaptation to the restabilization of capitalism, on the one hand, and to the apparent strengthening of the Stalinist bureaucracy, on the other.

Refracted through the political prism of the Cold War, the objective situation appeared to be dominated by the global conflict between the imperialist forces, spearheaded by the United States, and the Soviet Union and those labor and national revolutionary movements dominated by Stalinism. The real underlying conflict between the world bourgeoisie and the international proletariat — of which the Cold War was only a partial and distorted manifestation — receded from the political consciousness of those within the Fourth

International who were reacting impressionistically to world events.

The outbreak of the Korean War in 1950 provided a degree of political credibility to the conception that the United States was preparing for all-out war against the Soviet Union. Still occupied with a discussion which centered on the process through which the social character of the buffer states had been transformed under Stalinist auspices, Pablo seized upon the possibility of war, converted it into an imminent inevitability, and made it the starting point and centerpiece of a new and bizarre perspective for the realization of socialism.

Adopted at the ninth plenum of the IEC of the Fourth International, the theory of "war-revolution" argued that the eruption of war between the United States and the Soviet Union would assume the form of a global civil war, in which the Soviet bureaucracy would be compelled to serve as the midwife of social revolutions.

In the schema worked out by Pablo, the international proletariat ceased to play any independent role. Instead, all political initiative in the shaping of world events was attributed to world imperialism and the Soviet bureaucracy. This was spelled out in the document, suggestively entitled "Where Are We Going?" The theoretical essence of his perspective was spelled out as follows: "For our movement objective social reality consists essentially of the capitalist regime and the Stalinist world. Furthermore, whether we like it or not, these two elements by and large constitute objective social reality, for the overwhelming majority of the forces opposing capitalism are right now to be found under the leadership or influence of the Soviet bureaucracy."<sup>1</sup>

This extraordinary passage deserves to be memorized by every Trotskyist, for it is a classic example of the theoretical and political consequences of impressionism. Accepting uncritically the surface appearance of political events, Pablo's reality corresponded to the world as it looked to the bewildered petty-bourgeois journalist: in one corner, the United States and its allies; in the other corner, the Soviet Union and the movements dominated by the Kremlin bureaucracy.

Starting with his impressions of these two goliaths, he forgot all about the working class; and as he divided the world into two camps, Pablo conveniently ignored the class conflict raging within each of the two camps. This omission rendered impossible any serious analysis of the two protagonists upon whom Pablo focused all his attention. Moreover, by writing the working class out of existence as a history-making force, Pablo inevitably reduced to zero the independent political function of the Fourth International. The only role it could play, based on the two-camp theory of Pablo, was that of adviser to the Stalinist bureaucracy.

The theory of socialism through war was a corollary of the subordination of the class struggle to the conflict between the "Stalinist world" and the "capitalist regime." It was necessary to introduce some cataclysmic event, outside of the class struggle as it had been traditionally defined by Marxists, as the means through which revolutionary forces would be mobilized and galvanized. Thus, the impulse for world revolution was seen as originating in the decision of US imperialism to wage counterrevolutionary war against the Soviet Union:

Such a war would take on, from the very beginning, the character of an *international civil war*, especially in Europe and in Asia. These continents would rapidly pass over under the control of the Soviet bureaucracy, of the Communist Parties, or of the revolutionary masses.

War under these conditions, with the existing relationship of forces on the international arena, would essentially be *Revolution*. Thus the advance of anti-capitalist revolution in the world at one and the same time postpones and brings nearer the danger of general war.

Conversely, war this time means the *Revolution*.

These two conceptions of *Revolution* and of *War*, far from being in opposition or being differentiated as two significantly different stages of development, are *approaching each other more closely and becoming so interlinked as to be almost indistinguishable under certain circumstances and at certain times*. In their stead, it is the conception of *Revolution-War*, of *War-Revolution* which is emerging and upon which *the perspectives and orientation of revolutionary Marxists in our epoch should rest*.

Such language will perhaps shock the lovers of "pacifist" dreams and declamation, or those who already bemoan the apocalyptic end of the world which they foresee following upon an atomic war or a worldwide expansion of Stalinism. But these sensitive souls can find no place among the militants and least of all the revolutionary Marxist cadres of this most terrible epoch where the sharpness of the class struggle is carried to the extreme. *It is objective reality which thrusts this dialectic of Revolution-War to the forefront, which implacably destroys "pacifist" dreams, and which permits no respite in the gigantic simultaneous deployment of the forces of Revolution and of War and in their struggle to the death.*<sup>2</sup>

Behind all the bloodcurdling rhetoric lay a perspective of utter prostration and hopelessness. Not unlike the terrified German Stalinists of the early 1930s who disguised their pessimism and expectations of defeat at the hands of the Nazis with the slogan "After Hitler, us," Pablo proceeded from his unstated assumption that the working class was unable to defeat imperialism and prevent the outbreak of a nuclear war. In this way he arrived at the perspective, "After the nuclear obliteration of mankind, socialism!"

The most fantastic rationalizations for this "theory" were offered by Ernest Mandel, who, despite his earlier misgivings, had settled into the role of chief legal advocate and apologist for Pablo. He set out to convince the skeptical that nuclear war would not be all too terrible in the long run:

It is not excluded that the widespread devastation produced by an extended Third World War will provoke vast collapses in the machinery of production in great parts of the world which would thus facilitate initial bureaucratic deformations of new victorious revolutions. These deformations would not however be comparable to the monstrous bureaucratization of the USSR, a product of twenty-five years of special historical development. The experience of the Yugoslav and Chinese revolutions — despite all their weaknesses — fully confirms the prediction of Marx that each victorious proletarian revolution would surmount in large part the weaknesses and setbacks of the preceding revolutions. Our conviction in the victory of the American revolution, giving the socialist world a prodigious productive capacity even after a devastating war, allows us to

envisage with confidence perspectives of proletarian democracy after the Third World War.<sup>3</sup>

If a modern-day Jonathan Swift had set out to satirize revisionism with a tract entitled "A Modest Proposal for World War III and the Realization of Socialism," he could not have done a more effective job than that performed by Mandel. The simple questions which neither Mandel nor Pablo ever considered were: Why should the Fourth International reconcile itself to the "inevitability" of war?; Why should it accept a nuclear holocaust as the price of historical progress?; Why could it not rally the working class against imperialism and Stalinism prior to war and overthrow capitalism before a large portion of the planet was destroyed?

To understand why these simple questions were not asked, let alone answered, it is necessary to examine more closely the peculiar distortion of the Marxist method at the hands of Pablo, Mandel and their followers. As they adapted themselves to imperialism and its Stalinist agents and ceased to believe in the ability of the Trotskyists to win the leadership of the working class, Pablo and his allies adopted an objectivist method which was perfectly suited to a political perspective which surrendered all historical initiative to forces outside the working class and to political tendencies other than the Fourth International.

The standpoint of objectivism is contemplation rather than revolutionary practical activity, of observation rather than struggle; it justifies what is happening rather than explains what must be done. This method provided the theoretical underpinnings for a perspective in which Trotskyism was no longer seen as the doctrine guiding the practical activity of a party determined to conquer power and change the course of history, but rather as a general interpretation of a historical process in which socialism would ultimately be realized under the leadership of nonproletarian forces hostile to the Fourth International. Insofar as Trotskyism was to be credited with any direct role in the course of events, it was merely as a sort of subliminal mental process unconsciously guiding the activities of Stalinists, neo-Stalinists, semi-Stalinists and, of course, petty-bourgeois nationalists of one type or another.

Pabloism, in this sense, went way beyond a set of incorrect assessments, false prognoses and programmatic revisions. It attacked the whole foundation of scientific socialism and repudiated the central lessons abstracted by Marxists from the development of the class struggle over an entire century. The greatest conquest of Marxist theory in the twentieth century — the Leninist conception of the party — was undermined as Pablo called into question the necessity of the conscious element in the struggle of the proletariat and the historic realization of the proletarian dictatorship. For Pablo and his followers, there was no need to theoretically educate the working class and make it conscious of its historical tasks. It was not necessary to wage a struggle for Marxism against the domination of bourgeois ideology over the spontaneous movement of the working class.

Thus, Marxism ceased to be an active political and theoretical weapon through which the vanguard of the working class established its authority among the masses and trained and organized them for the socialist revolution. Rather, it was merely “confirmed” by an abstraction called the “historical process,” working in quasi-automatic fashion through whatever political tendencies were at hand, regardless of the class forces upon which they were objectively based and no matter how notorious their past or reactionary their program. This outlook, which had nothing to do with genuine Marxism and legitimized the most grotesque opportunism, was epitomized in an article written by George Clarke to commemorate the tenth anniversary of Trotsky’s assassination:

The most heartening and gratifying aspect of the rich and varied postwar experience has been the positive verification of Trotskyism in the test of the Yugoslav revolution. Here is to be found brilliant confirmation of Trotsky’s famous contribution to Marxism, the concept and strategy of the Permanent Revolution. It is not decisive for Marxists that this process is not yet openly recognized by the Yugoslav leaders. The consciousness of men, formed by environment, molded by training, hampered by prejudice and ego, influenced by obscure psychological reflexes — as the history of thought so often reveals — lags notoriously behind events. What is decisive is the actual process itself.<sup>4</sup>



The point of this article was to prove that the program of Trotskyism was being realized, miraculously, by those who were its bitterest enemies: "Ten years after his death a leader of a formerly Stalinist party holding state power repeats Trotsky's analysis of the Soviet bureaucracy almost word for word! And this, we are supremely confident, is only a first installment of a great historical vindication."<sup>5</sup>

The only conclusion that could be drawn from this article was that Trotskyism, through the sheer force of objective historical necessity, was being realized through its most implacable opponent — Stalinism. Even if Clarke intended to eulogize Trotsky, his objectivist approach turned into a political justification for the policies of Tito, calling to mind Lenin's warning about the consequences of objectivism, which he denounced as a divergence from materialism: "When demonstrating the necessity for a given series of facts, the objectivist always runs the risk of becoming an apologist for these facts: the materialist discloses the class contradictions and in so doing defines his standpoint."<sup>6</sup>

The above-quoted lines were directed against the school of "legal Marxism" which, while correctly establishing the capitalist nature of Russian economic development in the 1890s, habitually referred to "insurmountable historical tendencies" as if they operated outside of and independently of the class struggle. For objectivists, classes exist merely as programmed, unconscious executors of economic forces. Thus, the "legal Marxists" acknowledged and established the necessity of capitalist development in Russia, but would not recognize nor countenance the historical and political legitimacy of the struggle of the working class against the bourgeoisie.

In his critique of this objectivism, Lenin stressed a point of immense methodological significance: "Materialism includes partisanship, so to speak, and enjoins the direct and open adoption of the standpoint of a definite social group in any assessment of events."<sup>7</sup>

This lack of revolutionary proletarian partisanship marked the writings of Pablo and Mandel. All their pompous predictions, which they handed down in the style of oracles,

always excluded the intervention and counteraction of the working class as a conscious subject in the historical process.

The adaptation to Stalinism was a central feature of the new Pabloite outlook, but it would be a mistake to see this as its essential characteristic. Pabloism, was (and is) liquidationism all down the line: that is, the repudiation of the hegemony of the proletariat in the socialist revolution and the genuinely independent existence of the Fourth International as the conscious articulation of the historical role of the working class. The theory of war-revolution provided the initial setting for the elaboration of the central liquidationist thesis: that all Trotskyist parties must be dissolved into whatever political tendencies dominate the labor or mass popular movement in the countries in which the sections of the Fourth International worked.

Having lost confidence in the revolutionary capacity of the working class and in the ability of Trotskyism to defeat the powerful social democratic and Stalinist bureaucracies within the international workers' movement or to overcome the influence of the bourgeois nationalists in the backward countries, Pablo subordinated all questions of program, perspective and principle to an unrestrained tactical opportunism.

The practical activity of the Trotskyist movement was no longer to be centrally directed toward educating the proletariat, making it conscious of its historic tasks, and establishing its unconditional programmatic and organizational independence from all other class forces. Nor was this activity to be based upon a scientific analysis of social relations of production and class forces, grounded in a historically-based confidence in the unique revolutionary role of the proletariat. Instead, work was to be reduced to the small change of tactical expediency, in which principled positions established over decades of struggle were to be surrendered in the vain hope of influencing the leaders of the existing Stalinist, social democratic and bourgeois nationalist organizations and pushing them to the left.

Thus, the building of the party was conceived of in a manner that was totally alien to the traditions of Marxism. For Lenin and Trotsky, no matter how severe the isolation,

the political line of the party had to be based on the objective class interests of the proletariat and had to uphold and defend its political independence. They were supremely confident that the historical trajectory of a principled class line would inevitably intersect with the living movement of the working class under conditions of great revolutionary upheavals.

Moreover, this intersection was prepared over a long period through the development of the cadre assembled on the basis of the Marxist program. When Lenin and Trotsky spoke of the "logic of events," it was usually to assert the inevitable exposure and political collapse of the various petty-bourgeois charlatans who, despite their popularity and temporary domination of the mass movement at one or another stage of its development, could not satisfy the historical aims of that movement.

Far from standing aloof from the mass movement, Bolshevism always oriented its intervention at overcoming the gap between the tasks posed by the death agony of capitalism and the immaturity of the political consciousness dominating the proletariat and its allies.

For Pablo and the school of opportunism which he founded, tactical ingenuity replaced scientific historical materialist analysis as the foundation of the political life of the Fourth International. Trotskyism was seen increasingly as an ossified dogma that had no relevance to the proletariat and the mass movement in the various countries in which sections existed. The independent existence of the Fourth International, as a distinct political tendency fighting to oust the Stalinist, social democratic and other petty-bourgeois misleaders of the working class, was looked upon as a burdensome obstacle which had to be ended.

The liquidationist essence of the new doctrine was expressed most openly in the section of the report delivered by Pablo to the Third World Congress, which met in August-September 1951, entitled "The Road to the Masses":

All our analyses should be directed toward integrating ourselves better and more deeply into the real movement of the masses. The most striking feature of our movement today, which differentiates it fundamentally from what it was before and even during the war, is the profound

understanding by the great majority of our International of this necessity, and the practical, concrete application of this understanding.

For the first time in the history of our movement, particularly since the Second World Congress, the maturity of our cadres is evidenced by the stubborn, systematic exploration of the road which the real movement of the masses has taken in each country and the forms and organizations which express it the best, and by our concrete, and practical steps on this road.

This was not, is not as yet and will not be for some time to come an easy task, both insofar as its comprehension and its realization are concerned.

To understand the real movement of the masses means first of all to be able to correctly analyze the political situation in each country, its peculiarities, its dynamism, and to define the most appropriate tactics for reaching the masses.

What we have understood for the first time in the history of our movement and of the workers' movement in general — for the first time in as thoroughgoing a manner and on so large a scale — is that we must be capable of finding our place in the mass movement as it is, wherever it expresses itself, and to aid it to rise through its own experience to higher levels.<sup>8</sup>

Pablo spelled out the practical meaning of his proposal for “integrating ourselves better and more deeply into the real movement of the masses.” He continued:

But let us look back at the immense distance our movement has traveled toward maturity in the last years. There is not now one single Trotskyist organization, which either as a whole or in part does not seriously, profoundly, concretely understand *the necessity of subordinating all organizational considerations, of formal independence or otherwise, to real integration into the mass movement wherever it expresses itself in each country, or to integration in an important current of this movement which can be influenced.* There is not one single Trotskyist organization which has not found or is not seeking to find a real milieu for work.<sup>9</sup> (Emphasis added.)

Marxists have long recognized the need to intervene in the mass organizations of the working class. However, such

interventions, even when they required formal entry into a hostile organization, are carried out always from the standpoint of creating the best conditions for the building of the revolutionary party, which at all times preserves its independent political program and identity.

Lenin branded all attempts to subordinate the revolutionary party to these existing organizations as opportunism and liquidationism. There was no question but that Trotskyists, as all previous generations of Marxists, must work within the mass movement. But Pablo was clearly rejecting the necessity for an irreconcilable struggle against the false leaderships of the working class and was abandoning the perspective of building, in opposition to all the agencies of imperialism within the workers' movement, the independent revolutionary party. Instead, Pablo advocated that Trotskyists conceal their real programs, adapt themselves to the program and perspectives of the leaderships that dominated the mass organizations, and function merely as a muted pressure group operating within the precincts of Stalinism, social democracy and bourgeois nationalism.

I will go even further. What distinguishes us still more from the past, what makes for the quality of our movement today and constitutes the surest gauge of our future victories, is our growing capacity to understand, to appreciate the mass movement as it exists — often confused, often under treacherous, opportunist, centrist, bureaucratic and even bourgeois and petty-bourgeois leaderships — and our endeavors to find our place in this movement with the aim of raising it from its present to higher levels.

This is the case, for example, in Latin America where the anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist mass movement often assumes confused forms, under a petty-bourgeois leadership as with the APRA in Peru, with the MNR in Bolivia; or even under a bourgeois leadership as with Vargas in Brazil and Peron in Argentina. To reject these movements out of hand, to label them as reactionary, fascist or of no concern to us would be proof of the old type of "Trotskyist" immaturity and of a dogmatic, abstract, intellectualistic judgment of the mass movement. Even in this most backward area, from the viewpoint of the comprehension of our movement up to the present, we are about to overcome this stage, and I am certain that our Congress will know

how to view and appreciate this progress in the course of its labors.

Elsewhere, as in South Africa, Egypt, the North African colonies, in the Near East, we understand that the *eventual formation of a revolutionary party* now takes the road of unconditional support of the national, anti-imperialist mass movement and of integration into this movement.<sup>10</sup> (Emphasis added.)

The implications of this liquidationist program was expressed most clearly in the Third Congress's resolution on the tasks of the Fourth International in Latin America, which called for "participation and activity, free from all sectarianism, in all mass movements and all organizations which express, even in an indirect and confused fashion, the aspirations of the masses which may, for example, take the channel of the Peronist trade unions or the Bolivian MNR movement, or the APRA in Peru, the 'laborite' movement of Vargas, or Democratic Action in Venezuela."<sup>11</sup>

In relation to Bolivia and Peru, the Third Congress specifically sanctioned the formation of popular front alliances with sections of the national bourgeoisie:

In BOLIVIA, our past inadequacy in distinguishing ourselves from the political tendencies in the country which exploit the mass movement, sometimes the lack of clarity in our objectives and in our tactics, the loose organizational structure as well as the absence of patient, systematic work in working class circles has caused a certain decline of our influence and an organizational crisis. However, possibilities exist that our section, basing itself on powerful revolutionary traditions, can develop as the genuine revolutionary leadership of the masses in this country. Our reorganized and reoriented forces will have to remedy all the above faults without however slipping into sectarianism or isolating themselves from the masses and their movements which are often ideologically confused and led by the petty bourgeois (MNR).

Our section should concentrate its work especially in working class circles and organizations, particularly that of the miners.

On the other hand it will attempt to influence the left wing of the MNR which is based precisely on these circles.

They will propose a tactic of anti-imperialist united front to the MNR on precise occasions and on a concrete program, which revives in essence and still further concretizes the demands contained in the Pulacayo program of 1946.

These united front proposals to the MNR will have a progressive effect when advanced at propitious moments for the effective mobilization of the masses and are aimed precisely at achieving such a mobilization.

On the other hand, in the event of the mobilization of the masses under the preponderant impulsion or influence of the MNR, *our section should support the movement with all its strength, should not abstain but on the contrary intervene energetically in it with the aim of pushing it as far as possible up to the seizure of power by the MNR on the basis of a progressive program of anti-imperialist united front.*

On the contrary, if in the course of these mass mobilizations our section proves to be in a position to share influence over the revolutionary masses with the MNR, *it will advance the slogan of a Workers' and Peasants' Government of the two parties on the basis, however, of the same program, a government based on committees of workers, peasants and revolutionary elements of the urban petty bourgeoisie.*<sup>12</sup> (Emphasis added.)

This proposal demonstrated clearly that Pabloite liquidationism led directly, beneath the guise of "integrating into the mass movement," to class collaboration and the betrayal of the working class. The orientation proposed by Pablo had nothing whatsoever to do with the tactics pursued by the Bolsheviks in 1917 on the basis of the theory of permanent revolution. It sanctioned the adaptation of Lora to the bourgeois nationalism of Paz Estenssoro, which led directly to the defeat of the Bolivian working class in 1952.

Pablo advocated the same policy for the Peruvian section, which was instructed to

study its tactics toward the APRA within the framework of very similar considerations to those related to our tactics toward the MNR in Bolivia with the aim of influencing its most radical and anti-imperialist wing, and it should be ready to impel the mass movement as far as possible against the Odría dictatorship, a movement which will very probably move in the channel of this party (APRA) on the first occasion. It should extend and consolidate its points of

support in the essential working class circles of the country, particularly among the mining proletariat.<sup>13</sup>

The idea that the Trotskyists should challenge the bourgeois nationalists of the MNR or the APRA for the leadership of the working class and oppressed peasantry, that it should strive to expose before the masses the inability of these organizations to complete the democratic revolution and wage a consistent struggle against imperialism, and that it should unmask the political insincerity of these organizations' democratic pretensions was anathema to the political outlook being championed by Pablo. That, according to the new revisionist precepts, would have been to indulge in "sectarianism."

The Third Congress of 1951 revealed that a full-blown revisionist tendency had developed within the leadership of the Fourth International and this meant that the very existence of the world party founded by Leon Trotsky was now threatened with destruction. Referring to the Third Congress, the renegade Banda, who never uses the term liquidationism in his analysis of Pabloism, asserts: "There is little doubt in my mind that if Trotsky had been present at this improbable gathering of empirics and pragmatists he would have publicly dissociated from them with the declaration 'if this is Trotskyism I am no Trotskyist'."

Leon Trotsky would have done no such thing, precisely because he was a Marxist and not a petty-bourgeois hysteric like M. Banda. Banda, when confronted with a life-and-death crisis within the organization of which he was general secretary, completely lost his head, abandoned all his political responsibilities, turned to the bourgeois press for support and fled the country.

Had Trotsky been alive in 1951, he would have proceeded to organize within the Fourth International a protracted struggle against the revisionists, subjected their views to the most penetrating analysis and politically rearmed all those who defended Marxist principles. But such methods are beyond the comprehension of Banda, who long ago ceased to understand the meaning of principled revolutionary politics.



# 16

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## Cannon's Struggle Against the Cochranites

With his explanation of the political roots of the 1953 split, the renegade Banda descends to the lowest point of his frenzied campaign to discredit the Fourth International:

*I would therefore submit that the split of 1953 was inherent in the perspectives and policy adopted in 1951. It intensified the division between those who in Britain and the USA (eg Cannon and Healy) were orienting rapidly towards the labour and reformist bureaucracies and the state and those in Western Europe who were adapting to the pressure of the dominant Stalinist bureaucracies as in Italy and France....*

Pablo, by necessity, was forced to scheme and intrigue against those leaderships tied organically to the pro-Western bureaucracies such as Cannon, Healy and Lambert. Conversely Cannon and Healy were forced to protect their own base of operations — naturally while still claiming adherence to the same fraudulent 1951 decisions — from the pro-Stalinist orientation of Pablo. (Banda's emphasis.)

Thus, Banda now claims that the origins of the International Committee lie in a *right-wing faction* of the Fourth International that was tied to the pro-imperialist labor bureaucracies in the United States and Britain. Banda does not even bother to clarify a number of crucial issues that arise from his new interpretation.

If Cannon, Healy and Lambert were, in fact, "tied organically to the pro-Western bureaucracies" and "orienting

rapidly" to the imperialist state, it follows that the formation of the International Committee in 1953 was not merely "an undignified maneuver" but a reactionary attack from the right against the Trotskyist movement. If one accepts Banda's new explanation of 1953, one must then conclude that the rebellion against the Third Congress resolutions and the repudiation of Pablo's leadership represented, regardless of Pablo's errors, a mutiny by right-wingers. If Pablo was forced — Banda uses the phrase, "by necessity" — to "scheme and intrigue" against these "pro-imperialist" elements within the Fourth International, it would follow that the International Secretariat should have been critically supported against Cannon, Healy and Lambert. Banda should explain why he aligned himself with these "right-wingers" in 1953. While he now tells us that an article he wrote criticizing the FLN in Algeria several years later "was one of the most shameful episodes in my political career," what could have been worse than supporting those within the Fourth International who supposedly were acting as stooges for the right-wing Labourite bureaucracy in Britain and the CIA-dominated trade union bureaucracy in the United States?

However, Banda's interpretation collapses beneath the weight of the historical record. In 1953 Pablo found support within the SWP among those elements who were in the process of abandoning the struggle for Marxism in the United States and preparing to completely capitulate to the trade union bureaucracy. From 1951 on, Bert Cochran, the leader of the American Pabloite faction, was a shameless advocate of liquidationism within the SWP. He found support principally among a section of trade unionists inside the SWP who, in the face of the rabid McCarthyite witch-hunt, had lost all confidence in a revolutionary perspective. Cochran's faction was adapting to the growing conservatism of the older trade unionists who had once participated in the great CIO battles of the 1930s, but who were now enjoying the fruits of the seniority clause that guaranteed them steady employment and, at least compared to the conditions they had known in their youth, good pay.

Twelve years ago, in his obituary of Cannon, Banda fully solidarized himself with the struggle against the Cochranites:

"Cannon's instinct in relation to the minority was infallible. He recognized them as a conservative group of the labour aristocracy."<sup>1</sup>

The Trotskyists who formed the International Committee fought an alliance of those who were adapting simultaneously to the pressures of imperialism and Stalinism. The fact that Pablo, despite his pro-Stalinist orientation in Europe, allied himself with forces inside the SWP who were rapidly moving toward a political accommodation with the pro-imperialist Reutherite bureaucracy inside the United Auto Workers demonstrates that the essence of Pabloite revisionism was liquidationism, which inevitably assumed different forms depending upon national conditions. The social pressures bearing down upon the Fourth International generated a mood of skepticism and pessimism, which found its political articulation in the liquidationist formulations of Pablo. Behind the endless talk of "integrating" the national sections into the mass movement "as it is to be found in each country" and breaking with sectarianism and dogmatism was the assumption that Trotskyist principles were out-of-date, and doomed the organizations which upheld them to perennial isolation.

Cochran was drawn to Pablo because the revisionist line being developed in Paris opened the door for an adaptation to the trade union bureaucracy in the United States, where the pressures to give up the struggle for Marxism were especially great. For a brief period at the end of World War II, the massive strike wave of 1945-46 enabled the SWP to grow rapidly. However, the restabilization of capitalism in Europe and the outbreak of the Cold War suddenly stopped this development dead in its tracks. A wave of political reaction, unprecedented even by American standards, swept over the Socialist Workers Party and the entire left in the United States. The crimes of Stalinism, which had discredited the Communist Party in the eyes of the most militant workers, facilitated the anticommunist purge that was launched inside the trade unions in 1947.

Long before McCarthy made his debut with the infamous Wheeling speech of February 1950 ("I have in my hands the names of 205 known communists....") the witch-hunt had

assumed the dimensions of a nationwide hysteria. The broad audience of "socialist-minded" workers and intellectuals that had existed in the 1920s, 1930s, and up to the mid-1940s disappeared. The "treason of the intellectuals," whose servile toadying to the perspectives of Henry Luce was as disgusting as it was widespread, provided American imperialism with a swarm of apologists and propagandists, retailing what little they knew or remembered of Marxism to make a fast buck in the vast commercial enterprise known as professional anti-communism.

In his own inimitable style, Cannon had described the social process through which the radical intelligentsia of the 1930s abandoned the cause of social revolution:

One and all, these fugitives from the revolution think the late Thomas Wolfe was off base when he said, "You Can't Go Home Again", and refute him with pragmatic proof: "We can and we did". To anyone who values and respects human dignity they present a most unattractive spectacle. Their performance borders on obscenity when they take time out from ballyhooing the "Truman Doctrine" to deliver little homilies about "independence" and to expatiate, like any hypocritical crook, mammon-serving sky pilot or confidence man, on the well-known virtues of "morality". They are just about as independent — and just about as moral — as advertising copy-writers or the authors of radio commercials, including the singing variety.<sup>2</sup>

The SWP quickly lost most of the recruits it had made in the 1945-46 period and the older sections of trade union militants began to waver. The growth of liquidationism inside the SWP was the direct expression of the immense social pressures exerted by imperialism upon the workers' movement. Within the leadership of the SWP, Cochran pressured incessantly for an "Americanization" of the party that would broaden its appeal. There is no doubt that Cannon, who sensed the pessimism within the leading cadre and perhaps, at times, was affected by it himself, retreated beneath this pressure and made concessions to Cochran. In April 1951, Cannon reported to the political committee that a discussion within the secretariat had led to the proposal that the SWP should cease to publicly designate itself as Trotskyist:

I have the feeling that this designation impresses the average unpolitical American — the very person we are most interested in — as a sectarian movement, as followers of some individual, and a Russian at that. It is not a suitable characterization for a broad American movement. Our enemies will refer to us as Trotskyists, and we will, of course, not deny it; but we should say: "We are Trotskyists because Trotsky was a true socialist...."

What we are presenting against American capitalism and the labor bureaucracy is the principle of the class struggle of modern socialism. I think we ought to consider this seriously from the point of view of propaganda technique, and more and more refer to ourselves as Socialists, revolutionary Socialist, Socialist Workers, or something like that....

Let our enemies within the movement, that is in the narrow framework of the more political movement, call us Trotskyist. We will not protest. But then we will say we are Trotskyist because he represented genuine socialism and we, like him, are the real Socialists. This has importance because more and more in elections we have the only candidates against the bourgeois candidates.<sup>3</sup>

Not only did the political committee agree to stop identifying itself publicly as Trotskyist, but it also decided to remove from the masthead of the editorial page the photographs of Lenin and Trotsky. These shameful decisions, which expressed Cannon's retreat before the growing strength of the right wing within the leadership of the SWP, were enthusiastically applauded by Cochran, who saw them as only the first small steps that had to be taken in order to make the SWP respectable within the United States.

Shortly before the Third Congress, Cochran submitted a document in which he made clear that the thrust of the political line being advanced inside the Fourth International by Pablo and himself was toward a repudiation of Trotskyism as a distinct tendency within the workers' movement organized as the world party of socialist revolution.

We have come a long way in the discussion since we first began debating the class nature of the East-European states, and every one of us has undoubtedly learned something from it. It is not too much to say that the discussion and resultant re-orientation has saved our

movement a crisis, has wrenched us out of the ungainly posture of rejecting and denying world-shaking revolutionary developments, because the world was not moving in strict accordance with our programmatic norms and prescriptions....

This re-orientation of our movement, this concretization of our tasks must be a source of great satisfaction to all of us. Because, by it, we have gotten back into the world of politics, and shut the door on the insulated domain of doctrinaires, where the battle-cry is: "Long live justice, though the world may perish." For, if the Shachtmanite cadre faces the imminent danger of total disintegration under the hammer blows of bourgeois and Social Democratic public opinion, our cadre faces an opposite danger, (although, as this discussion has demonstrated, an admittedly remote one). Our cadre, in its anxiety to steel itself against the pressures of a hostile world, faces a possible danger of petrification, of inuring itself to the play of criticism upon the organization, of people getting closed minds and adopting the attitudes of a shut-in-circle, of converting the writings of the Marxist masters into Scripture, of reducing Marxism to scholasticism.<sup>4</sup>

When Cochran dealt with the perspectives and practical tasks of the SWP, the significance of his enthusiasm for the Paris line became clear:

Several months ago our committee decided to drop the designation of "Trotskyist" from our general literature and to discontinue running the pictures of Lenin and Trotsky in every issue of the paper. This decision, long overdue, is to be heartily applauded as part of the process of the Americanization of our party, of the elimination of all externals which are unnecessary roadblocks in our path. What is now required is that this practical adjustment in our propaganda be generalized into a conscious and planned orientation.

Our movement has not, so far, made the impact on American political life of the revolutionary currents that preceded us. We haven't left the mark on the American working class that the IWW or the Debs Socialists did. We are still looked upon, more than some realize, as a group of hero-worshippers, personal adherents of Leon Trotsky, as a sect of eccentrics. Even many sophisticated labor militants friendly to us, (and they are all getting pretty sophisticated

nowadays) view Trotskyism not just as a political program that is too extreme, or with which they cannot go along, but as something of an oddity, something that is foreign, far-away, alien to America and its problems....

We emerged as an organization in America out of a split in Russia that the American workers, and even their most advanced elements, knew little about and cared less....

We cannot afford to live in the past, or in a make-believe world of our own creation. We cannot afford any Quixotism. While our program is based, and will continue to be based upon the international experiences of the working class; and while Trotsky was, in the immediate and most direct sense, the teacher and the leader of our movement, it does not at all follow from these two propositions that we will have much success in rallying workers to our banner by trying to straighten them out on the rights and wrongs of the Stalin-Trotsky fight, which has now receded into history — or that it is our revolutionary duty to try to do so. Paying homage to the memory of a great man is not our main task as a political party. We will vindicate Trotsky's struggle — and our own — by becoming a force; and in no other way. And we will become a force only when we succeed in implanting ourselves into the consciousness of the working class of this country as an authentic and indigenous band of American revolutionary militants.<sup>5</sup>

The words of Cochran give the lie to Banda's brazen distortion of the political content of the 1951-53 struggle inside the Fourth International. Pablo's pro-Stalinism in France was completely compatible with the views of those in the United States who were advocating the renunciation of the SWP's revolutionary Marxist heritage. The real capitulators to imperialism were Pablo's American supporters, who, in their zeal to "de-Russify" the organization, seemed to be intent on creating their own version of the House Un-American Activities Committee inside the Socialist Workers Party.

In early 1952 Cochran, a member of the SWP's Detroit branch, made a bloc with George Clarke who was deeply involved in international work. He worked closely with Pablo, and had been demanding since the Third World Congress that the SWP place central emphasis on an orientation toward the Stalinist forces. Cannon immediately recognized

the unprincipled nature of this political bloc — the Detroit branch had previously shown no interest whatsoever in closer contact with the Stalinists — and became convinced that Cochran was building up a faction based on the growing conservatism of sections of the SWP's trade union cadre.

His appraisal of Cochran to some extent colored his attitude toward Pablo and the Third Congress. Knowing that Cochran had no interest whatsoever in turning to the crisis-stricken and demoralized Stalinist milieu in the United States, Cannon tended to discount Cochran's invocation of the Third Congress resolutions as a hypocritical attempt to conceal the latter's orientation to the labor bureaucracy. In an ill-conceived and pragmatic attempt to deny Cochran's liquidationist views any international legitimacy, Cannon repeatedly denied that the Third Congress documents sanctioned the capitulatory line being pushed by the Cochranites. In these efforts Cannon was wrong and this led him to make serious political errors, such as his refusal to intervene against Pablo's bureaucratic expulsion of the leadership of the French section, despite the desperate appeal from Daniel Renard in February 1952. Not until mid-1953 did Cannon finally recognize that Cochranism was part of an international right-wing liquidationist tendency whose ideological center was Pablo's Secretariat.

However, and this is not to justify Cannon's errors, he came to understand the nature, extent and implications of Pablo's revisionism as a result of the desperate struggle he had to wage over a protracted period against an extremely powerful opposition within the SWP. At an enlarged meeting of the SWP Political Committee in March 1952 and then at a central committee plenum two months later, Cannon challenged Cochran to come out openly and state his real perspectives. However, so sharp was the political change within the SWP under the impact of the immense class pressures that Cannon found little support for a fight against the Cochranites. He had lost his majority within the national committee and was faced with accusations that his attitude toward Cochran was unreasonably factional. Among those who turned against him was Farrell Dobbs. This episode



shattered Cannon's political confidence in the man whom he had looked upon as his successor in the party leadership.

At the party convention in July 1952, Cannon began to prepare the membership for the upcoming fight. Countering those who were suggesting that the difficulties facing the party stemmed from the failure of Trotskyism, Cannon insisted that the main cause of the SWP's isolation lay in the unfavorable political situation:

Big changes have taken place since the stormy days of the early CIO — and even since the years 1944-1946. In the past five or six years of the armaments boom, the class struggle has been muffled, mainly as a result of full employment and comparatively high wages. The upsurge of the late thirties, which flared up again in the late forties, has been followed by a workers' attitude of wait and see. The workers have settled down into relative passivity, and a monolithic conservative bureaucracy has been consolidated with a firm control over the unions.

This new consolidated, conservative bureaucracy is closely tied in with the government and is, in effect, a government agency in the unions. It fully and consciously supports the whole foreign program of American imperialism and hopes to share in the crumbs of the prospective spoils at the expense of the rest of the people of the whole world.

That is, roughly, the new and changed situation which we have been up against for the past six years. It is radically different from the situation in the earlier period of the CIO. It is also radically different from the situation before the rise of the CIO when the great mass of the workers were still unorganized.

In some respects, the new situation is temporarily more unfavorable for recruitment into the revolutionary vanguard than the situation before the rise of the CIO. We were isolated then too, but it was not an organized isolation...

The American working class has changed profoundly in the past twenty years. In fact, it has undergone two profound changes. First, it changed from the atomized and helpless class of the twenties to the insurgent, semi-revolutionary mass movements of the middle and late thirties, which rose up on the yeast of the Great Depression. Second, this insurgent, broadly democratic mass movement

of the thirties has changed into the organized and bureaucratized labor movement of the present day, has grown passive and conservative under the influence of prosperity, and is now dominated from top to bottom by a conservative bureaucracy of imperialist agents....

This boom — as far as I know — is unprecedented in the history of capitalism, in its scope and duration. We have economic prosperity combined with political reaction....

We, the Marxist party of the revolutionary vanguard, have not thrived and grown in the atmosphere of prosperity and reaction, and could not do so. The resolution acknowledges this: "We have undergone losses," says the resolution, the party has "experienced victimizations, and found itself forced to make retreats." And then the resolution adds: "These are by no means ended." It will greatly aid our deliberations if instead of slurring over these harsh acknowledgments of inescapable facts we weigh them seriously as the basic cause of whatever troubles we may be having or may anticipate in the period before us.<sup>6</sup>

By November 1952 Cannon — now residing in Los Angeles — was seeking to mobilize forces throughout the party for a fight against what he clearly identified as a right-wing tendency. He spoke scathingly of the passivity of the national committee, which had "too many people who think a deep-going sickness can be exorcised by ignoring it or diplomatizing with it; who haven't yet learned the real meaning of principled politics, or have forgotten what they learned."<sup>7</sup>

In this letter of November 21, 1952 to Dan Roberts, Cannon declared:

The failure of the National Committee, as at present constituted, to quarantine the infection does not at all convince me that I was wrong in my diagnosis and in the measures I employed. Quite the contrary. The results of the experiment only convince me that the infection, in a less developed form, is more widespread in the leading cadre than I had hoped at the time. In my opinion the results of these experiences mean that all hopes — better to say, illusions — about solving the crisis by diplomacy, tongue-in-cheek agreements to confine the dispute within the National Committee, and similar political chicken feed — must be resolutely cast aside. *The National Committee is not going*

*to settle this dispute for the simple reason that it is not able to.*

*Nothing will do now but a thoroughgoing discussion in which the entire party participates, and after which the party consciously decides.*<sup>8</sup>

In February 1953 Cannon wrote to Arne Swabeck, a cofounder of the Trotskyist movement in the United States, to complain bitterly about those who were avoiding the fight against Cochran:

These mush-mouth "nonfactionalists" are the worst, the most corrupt factionalists of all. When they say they don't want to fight, they mean they don't want to fight in the open. But the party has been built from the beginning by posing all questions openly and fighting them out in the open. That's the only way the party members can learn anything from the disputes in the leadership. The real test and final justification of every internal struggle is precisely this: What has been learned by the members and assimilated into the traditions of the party? ...

We here in California are fully prepared to collaborate openly, in dead earnest, and with all our strength with all comrades who are interested in such a struggle and see the necessity for it; and we don't give a damn whether they belong to the National Committee or not. We make only one small condition: no compromise with Cochranism, and no derailment from the main highway of principled politics into the side streets, blind alleys, swamps and sumps of secondary questions, personal beefs and gripes, and other inconsequential trifles.<sup>9</sup>

Slowly, Cannon reassembled a shaky majority within the national committee which was, as subsequent events demonstrated, none too firm in its opposition to Cochran's views. The struggle was handicapped by Cannon's efforts to treat the liquidationist views of Cochran as if they were simply a local problem unrelated to the political line of the Third World Congress. But although Cannon had still not taken the measure of Pablo, he knew exactly what social forces were represented by Cochran, as his speech to a caucus of the party majority in New York on May 11, 1953 made clear:

Since the consolidation of the CIO unions and the 13-year period of war and postwar boom, a new stratification has

taken place within the American working class, and particularly and conspicuously in the CIO unions. Our party, which is rooted in the unions, reflects that stratification too. The worker who has soaked up the general atmosphere of the long prosperity and begun to live and think like a petty bourgeois is a familiar figure in the country at large. He has even made his appearance in the Socialist Workers Party as a ready-made recruit for an opportunist faction....

It appears to me now, in the light of the conflict in the party and its real causes, which are now manifest, that those sections of the convention resolution dealing with the class as a whole require further elaboration and amplification. We need a more precise examination of the stratifications within the working class, which are barely touched there, and of the projection of these stratifications in the composition of the unions, in the various inner-union tendencies, and even in our own party. This, I believe, is the key to the otherwise inexplicable riddle of why one proletarian section of the party, even though it is a small minority, supports a capitulatory opportunist faction against the proletarian-revolutionary line and leadership of the party....

The pioneer militants of the CIO unions are sixteen years older than they were in 1937. They are better off than the ragged and hungry sit-down strikers of 1937; and many of them are sixteen times softer and more conservative. This privileged section of the unions, formerly the backbone of the left wing, is today the main social base of the conservative Reuther bureaucracy. They are convinced far less by Reuther's clever demagogy than by the fact that he really articulates their own conservatized moods and patterns of thought....

This new stratification in the new unions is a feature which the party can no longer ignore. All the more so, since we now see it directly reflected in our party. A number of party members in the auto union belong to this privileged upper stratum. That's the first thing you have to recognize. Some of the best militants, the best stalwarts of the party in the old times, have been affected by the changed conditions of their own lives and by their new environment. They see the old militants in the unions, who formerly cooperated with them, growing slower, more satisfied, more conservative. They still mix with these ex-militants socially,

and are infected by them. They develop a pessimistic outlook from the reactions they get on every side from these old-timers, and, unknown to themselves, acquire an element of that same conservatism.

That, in my opinion, is the reason why they support a crudely conservative, pessimistic, capitulatory tendency in our internal faction fight. This, I am afraid, is not a misunderstanding on their part. I wish it were, for in that case our task would be easy. The miserable arguments of the Cochranites cannot stand up against Marxist criticism — provided one accepts the criteria of revolutionary Marxism.

But that's the rub. Our conservatized trade unionists no longer accept these criteria. Like many others, who "used to be radicals themselves," they are beginning to talk about our "Theses on the American Revolution" as a "crack-pot" idea. They don't "feel" that way, and nobody can talk them out of the way they do feel.

That — and perhaps a guilty conscience — is the true explanation of their subjectivity, their rudeness and factional frenzy, when one tries to argue with them from the principled standpoint of the "old Trotskyism." They do not follow Cochran out of exceptional regard for him personally, because they know Cochran. They simply recognize in Cochran, with his capitulatory defeatism and his program of retreat from the fighting arena to a propaganda circle, the authentic spokesman of their own mood of retreat and withdrawal.

Just as the older, more skilled and privileged German trade unionists supported the right against the left, and as their Russian counterparts supported the Mensheviks against the Bolsheviks, the "professional trade unionists" in our party support Cochranism in our fight. And for the same basic reasons.

I, for my part, must frankly admit that I did not see this whole picture at the beginning of the fight. I anticipated that some tired and pessimistic people, who were looking for some sort of rationalization to slow down or get out of the struggle, would support any kind of an opposition faction that would arise. That happens in every faction fight. But I didn't anticipate the emergence of a conservatized workers' stratum serving as an organized grouping and a social basis for an opportunist faction in the party.

Still less did I expect to see such a grouping strutting around in the party demanding special consideration because they are "trade unionists." What's exceptional about that? There are fifteen million trade unionists in this country, but not quite so many revolutionists. But the revolutionists are the ones who count with us.<sup>10</sup>

As we have already noted, Banda specifically cited with approval this analysis of the American Pabloites in his 1974 obituary of Cannon. And yet without attempting to show that this analysis was wrong, Banda now presents an interpretation of the 1953 split which ignores the indisputable fact that from among those trade unionist sections of the SWP "tied organically to the pro-Western bureaucracies," Pablo found his most enthusiastic supporters.

In the aftermath of the split in 1953, the Cochranites lost all interest in the pro-Stalinist element in the general liquidationist line worked out by Pablo. As Cannon had correctly stated, the Cochranite trade unionists' sudden palpitations about the prospects for work among the Stalinists were utterly insincere and contrived. Once outside the SWP, Bert Cochran carried out Pabloite "deep-entryism," not inside the Communist Party, but inside the Democratic Party. Before his death in 1985, he became an admiring biographer of President Harry Truman and a friend of Zbigniew Brzezinski, the man who served as Jimmy Carter's National Security adviser from 1977 to 1981.<sup>11</sup>

# 17

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## The Split in the Fourth International

It is hardly surprising that the renegade Banda centers his denunciation of the International Committee on the document which summoned Trotskyists all over the world to fight a revisionist cancer which threatened to destroy the world party of socialist revolution.

The "Open Letter," written by James P. Cannon in November 1953, occupies a unique place of honor in the history of the Fourth International. Its stature can be gauged by the not insignificant fact that after 33 years, it still inspires revolutionists and inflames the anger of renegades. This "Letter to Trotskyists Throughout the World" remains the great political landmark in the history of the Fourth International which has defined the boundaries between Marxism and revisionism for more than a generation.

Since 1953, the "Open Letter" has been the nemesis of every revisionist tendency which has broken with Trotskyism. In opposition to the revisionism of Pablo, the "Open Letter" reaffirmed the foundations and historic perspective of the Fourth International. Inasmuch as virtually all revisionist tendencies since 1953 have done little more than improvise variations on the themes composed by Pablo, the principles articulated in the "Open Letter" and a series of associated documents written by Cannon in 1953-54 have provided Trotskyists with a basic orientation in combating the enemies of the Fourth International.

Although virtually his entire political life was bound up with this extraordinary document, Banda now writes:

The Open Letter and the formation of the IC is being touted around by D. North and his bureaucratic clique as a historic gain of Trotskyism which must be unconditionally defended. This merely testifies to the theoretical poverty, intellectual arrogance and political immaturity of this sorry little gang of liars. The Open Letter was an opportunist response by Healy and Cannon conducted in the most arbitrary and hasty manner to give themselves an alibi for their own incredible political skulduggery.

There was neither logic nor honesty nor truth in this equivocal and undignified manoeuvre. *They fought Pabloism with Pabloism. They first of all deliberately created a Frankenstein Monster in the form of Pablo and then, through the Open Letter, tried desperately to absolve themselves of all responsibility and deliberately prevented any real discussion on and examination of the political, social and historical roots of Pabloism.*

Rather than examining the political content of the "Open Letter," Banda dismisses it as an "alibi" for the crimes supposedly committed by Healy and Cannon at an earlier stage. What a bankrupt substitute for a genuine analysis of historical processes! If one were to apply this method to, let us say, the history of the United States, one could conclude that the Emancipation Proclamation was, no less than the "Open Letter," an "equivocal and undignified maneuver" aimed at covering up Lincoln's "incredible political skulduggery." After all, during the first year of the Civil War, he refused to act against slavery, then drafted the proclamation in secret, introduced it only under the pressure of military necessity, was persuaded to delay its publication until the North won a victory and, to top it all off, limited the emancipation order to only those states still in rebellion as of January 1, 1863. That is, he "freed" the slaves only in those parts of the United States where the Union exercised no authority and could not enforce the proclamation!

Why not go even further and condemn the entire Civil War on the grounds that the Confederacy was a "Frankenstein Monster" created by the Founding Fathers whose constitutional compromises legitimized slavery in the South?



Professor Banda could justify this condemnation by explaining that Lincoln, trying desperately to absolve the North of all responsibility for the crisis his political forebears had created, appealed "in the most arbitrary and hasty manner" for 75,000 volunteers after the surrender of Fort Sumter in order to prevent "any real discussion on and examination of the political, social and historical roots of" the Confederacy.

For those who would object that the analogy is too far fetched, let us find one that is drawn from the history of the Marxist movement. No doubt if Banda had been in Petrograd in April 1917, he would have denounced Lenin's "April Theses" in a lengthy tract reminding one and all that Lenin was the author of the notorious theory of the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry, that he bore full responsibility for the desperate crisis inside the Bolshevik Party and that there "was neither logic nor honesty nor truth" in his attacks on the Old Bolsheviks. Perhaps he would have called his article "27 Reasons Why the Bolshevik Party Should Be Buried and the Socialist Revolution Called Off"!

For all the petty-bourgeois philistines who appoint themselves the proofreaders of history, there is no shortage of "typos" to be found in the political biographies of even the greatest Marxists. In the mistakes of these fighters they discover justifications for their own pettiness, lack of character and incapacity for revolutionary action. It is comparatively easy to fault Cannon for not having recognized in 1951 the full implications of the Third World Congress documents. That is a mistake that was shared by many in the Fourth International — including Banda, who though he claimed later to have had doubts early on, apparently kept them to himself. But whatever Cannon's political limitations and mistakes, he rose to the occasion in 1953 and summoned all his experience and fighting capacities to oppose the liquidation of the Fourth International. All Trotskyists, including those who had perhaps understood the insidious role of Pablo somewhat earlier, welcomed with enthusiasm the powerful and decisive intervention of this veteran 63-year-old revolutionist against the intrigues of the liquidators. After all, it is rare, as recent experience has again

confirmed, to find men anywhere near that age who are prepared to take the field of battle against revisionism!

In this struggle, Cannon represented the historical interests of the working class, that is, its struggle to break free from the stranglehold of Stalinism and all other agencies of imperialism within the workers' movement. Significantly, Banda does not tell us what he thinks Cannon should have done in 1953 to defend the Fourth International under conditions in which Pablo was exploiting the administrative post he held in the leadership of the Fourth International to expel majorities within sections which opposed his liquidationist line. In justifying the need for such drastic action as publicly denouncing Pablo in the pages of the *Militant*, Cannon remarked that when the shooting starts, discussion ends. This is something which Banda most likely does not understand, given the fact that inside the WRP shooting generally started before discussion even began. At any rate, the SWP issued the "Open Letter" when it realized it was dealing with a ruthless and unprincipled clique that was intent on using its control of the International Secretariat to suppress discussion and expel Trotskyists from the Fourth International.

If Banda now objects to the publication of the "Open Letter," it is only because he has come to agree with the political positions represented by Pablo. From where he stands today, Banda wishes that the "Open Letter" had not been written, that the International Committee had not been founded, and that Pablo had succeeded in liquidating the Fourth International.

Banda's repudiation of the struggle against Pabloism is highlighted by the fact that he makes no reference to the major developments within the international political situation which formed the objective background to the split and contributed to clarifying the fundamental issues of program and principle at stake in the struggle: the death of Stalin in March 1953, the East German uprising of June 1953, and the French General Strike of August 1953. As a truly internationalist document, the "Open Letter" dealt with all these questions.

Several weeks after Stalin's death, George Clarke — who, along with Cochran, was Pablo's closest ally in the SWP — delivered a report entitled "Stalin's Role — Stalinism's Future." This speech introduced two fundamental revisions of the Trotskyist appraisal of Stalinism. First, it suggested that socialist property forms existed inside the USSR: a claim made by the Stalinists, but always rejected by Trotsky. Second, Clarke challenged the concept of the political revolution as it had been developed by the Fourth International over a period of 20 years. Speculating over the form that the downfall of Stalinism will take, Clarke wrote:

Will the process take the form of a violent upheaval against bureaucratic rule in the USSR? Or will concessions to the masses and sharing of power — as was the long course of the English bourgeois revolution in the political relationship between the rising bourgeoisie and the declining nobility — gradually undermine the base of the bureaucracy? Or will the evolution be a combination of both forms? That we cannot foresee. *But that this process means not the end of socialism, but its great renaissance — that is certain.*<sup>1</sup> (Clarke's emphasis.)

Trotsky had explicitly rejected any suggestion that the overthrow of the Stalinist bureaucracy inside the USSR could be achieved by anything other than a violent political revolution. But Clarke was now advancing the conception that there could be some peaceful growing over of Stalinism into socialism, a view that had been originally propounded by Isaac Deutscher, the centrist from Poland who emigrated to Britain and achieved fame as a journalist and biographer of Stalin and Trotsky. In writings which coincided with and influenced Pablo's thinking, Deutscher argued that the realization of socialism will be accomplished through political tendencies that are neither Stalinist nor Trotskyist. Rather, he asserted that the gradual self-reform of the bureaucracy will crystallize in a socialist movement that incorporates that which is historically progressive in both Stalinism and Trotskyism.

Clarke's revisionist line was further developed by Pablo in an article entitled "The Post Stalin 'New Course'," in which he projected an irreversible "de-Stalinization" of the bureau-

cracy. In appraising the significance of the East German uprising, Pablo saw it neither as a harbinger of political revolution against Stalinism nor as a demonstration of the irreconcilable antagonism between the working class and the bureaucracy, despite the violence which accompanied the uprising and the ruthlessness with which it was suppressed. Instead, Pablo placed central emphasis on the political concessions made by the bureaucracy to the East German working class: "But once the concessions are broadened, the march forward toward a real liquidation of the Stalinist regime threatens to become irresistible."<sup>2</sup>

Proceeding from this conception that Stalinism would be liquidated through a process of concessions to mass pressure, Pablo saw the victory of socialism within the USSR and Eastern Europe as the outcome of "violent interbureaucratic struggles between the 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...."<sup>3</sup>

The response of the Socialist Workers Party was diametrically opposed to the Clarke-Pablo line. It denounced the so-called concessions of the Stalinists as aimed at enabling "the regime to continue holding the workers by the throat,"<sup>4</sup> and insisted:

This political uprising of the German workers laid bare the irreconcilable conflict between the working masses and the parasitic Stalinist bureaucracy. The relations and conditions which produced the East German events are not limited to East Germany; they prevail throughout the buffer-zone countries and within the Soviet Union itself. East Germany thus foreshadows the revolutionary developments and struggles that lie ahead in the Stalinist-dominated countries.<sup>5</sup>

Pablo's repudiation of the political revolution and his projection of bureaucratic self-reform represented the culmination of the liquidationist line which he had been developing since 1949. By 1953, under conditions in which the working class was entering into direct struggle against Stalinism, Pablo's role had become that of an attorney for the Soviet and East European bureaucracies.

Thus, it was no longer possible for Pablo to conceal the revisionist and liquidationist content of his political line with all sorts of superficially plausible references to the need for the Trotskyist movement to "break out of its isolation" and other much-beloved arguments of opportunists. By the time Pablo published a further "concretization" of the strategy of the Third World Congress, a document entitled "Our Integration in the Real Mass Movement, Our Experience and Perspectives," it had become clear that he was consciously working for the transformation of the sections of the Fourth International into little more than appendages of the Stalinist bureaucracies or whatever petty-bourgeois apparatuses dominated the mass labor movements in different countries. His proposals for universal "entryism" amounted to an organizational prescription for the political dissolution of the Fourth International as a revolutionary Marxist party of the working class.

While our strategy, as the only revolutionary Marxist tendency, is the conquest of power by the proletariat and the triumph of the socialist revolution on a world scale, our tactic must take into account the concrete objective and subjective conditions so as to create the most timely and the most effective possible regroupment of conscious revolutionary forces larger than our own, and to form in the fusion with them big Marxist revolutionary parties.

In the final analysis our tactic is aimed at the creation of such revolutionary parties which are indispensable for the rapid and complete victory of the world socialist revolution.

But we envisage their creation concretely as part of the process of the movement of the class itself in each country, in the course of its maturing politically through its concrete experience, which will be assisted on the one side by the favorable objective conditions of the period, and on the other side by our own participation in the real class movement, with the aid of our program, ideas and our activity.<sup>6</sup>

All this talk about "the movement of the class itself" was nothing less than glib rationalizations for the betrayal of principles and the subordination of the Fourth International to alien class forces.

We take the class as it is in each country, with its peculiarities, we study its natural movements, we discern in them the progressive features, and we adopt our tactic accordingly.

The form matters little to us; the class content often deformed, concealed, latent or even potential, is, however, of decisive importance. But to discover this requires a high level of maturity of which our movement has generally given proof.<sup>7</sup>

Whoever wants to understand the nature of Pabloite revisionism should carefully study the above two paragraphs, which represented an updated version of the old opportunist formulation, "The movement is everything; the final goal nothing." Pablo was the first in a long line of revisionist "operators" inside the Fourth International who made a virtue of unrestrained opportunism. They always justified their tactical improvisations with references to the smallness of the Trotskyist movement, its need to break out of isolation, etc. To say, "The form matters little to us" amounted to a justification for unprincipled relations with virtually every species of political organization, regardless of the class character of their social base and program. The assertion that the "deformed, concealed, latent or even potential" class content of organizations is "of decisive importance" was to declare war on the Marxist, historical materialist, conception of politics. Such an approach led inexorably to a modus operandi in which impressionism, maneuvers and tactical hocus-pocus became the day-to-day axis of sections which accepted this method.

For all his double-talk and diplomatic evasions, Pablo's "entrist" proposals were based on the conception that the injection of Trotskyist serum into Stalinist, reformist and bourgeois nationalist organizations would, through some obscure process of political alchemy, convert these anti-socialist forces into the medium through which the proletarian revolution was eventually achieved.

Pablo denounced as sectarianism the basic conception which underlay the founding of the Fourth International in 1938: that the crisis of revolutionary leadership could only be resolved by the Trotskyist movement, which alone represented the heritage and continuity of Marxism. Trotsky

had maintained that outside the Fourth International "there does not exist a single revolutionary current on this planet really meriting the name."<sup>8</sup>

This belief in the decisive historical role of the Fourth International was rejected contemptuously by Pablo, who wrote in October 1953, "In the present concrete historical conditions the variant which is more and more the least probable is the one where the masses, disillusioned by the reformists and Stalinists, break with their traditional mass organizations to come to polarize themselves around our present nuclei, the latter acting exclusively and essentially *in an independent manner, from without.*"<sup>9</sup>

Pablo considered it unrealistic to believe, as Trotsky certainly did, that the sections of the Fourth International could repeat the feat accomplished by the Bolsheviks in 1917 when, within the context of a revolutionary situation, they rose from a comparatively small minority within the working class to become a mass party in just a few months. Pablo argued:

The general historical conditions characterizing the international workers' movement, and the Russian workers' movement in particular in 1917, are no longer the same, were it only because of the subsequent existence of the Soviet Union and Stalinism.... the case is entirely different now in the big capitalist countries, especially where a traditional mass movement exists, organized under a reformist or Stalinist leadership.<sup>10</sup>

This was the real perspective of Pablo: the Fourth International could never aspire to the leadership of the working class; it could never successfully challenge the Stalinists and social democrats. There was no point in fighting patiently to extend the authority of the Trotskyist movement through implacable struggle against the powerful bureaucracies. Instead, the Fourth International had to dissolve itself into the Stalinist parties in Europe (or into whatever other mass movement dominated the labor movement in other countries, e.g., Peronism in Argentina). Pablo's petty-bourgeois pessimism was disguised with the demagogic rationalization which is still repeated by all varieties of

anti-Trotskyist revisionism: "We want to be and we will be with the real revolution."<sup>11</sup>

Pablo's message was welcomed by the demoralized petty-bourgeois and conservatized workers within the Fourth International who no longer believed in the viability of a Marxist perspective within the labor movements of their own countries and who were fed up with Trotskyism. While they pretended that Pablo had found the magic formula for the building of mass parties, they understood that he was really legitimizing their "integration" into the swamp of existing reformist working class organizations. In October 1953, an Australian supporter of Pablo, Win Brad Jr., wrote an angry letter to the SWP editors of *Fourth International* in which he denounced Morris Stein's critique of Clarke's line on the East German uprising:

Leon Trotsky died in 1940 — 13 years ago. A new generation, of which I am a member, has arisen since who will build socialism on a world scale. This new generation most probably can't even remember when Leon Trotsky was alive. We cannot remember for we were hardly born in the days of the Moscow Trials, the days of the Popular Front and the United Front. We have only a very dim recollection of the Second World War and the only period we know is the period since the war and the only thing we're really conscious of is that the final showdown between the old and the new orders — capitalism and socialism, will occur before we are middle-aged.

To prove and to base an argument on the quotation of a man who died 12 years ago — no matter how brilliant the man, how profoundly correct his ideas, without any resort to the world since 1945 does not satisfy us. Leon Trotsky wrote for a particular period and for a particular set of circumstances.... Twelve years is a long time, particularly in this century and the period of 1933-41 is not the same as the period 1945-53....<sup>12</sup>

By the autumn of that year, a virtual civil war had erupted in the Fourth International. Those who supported Pablo became uncontrolled in their factional hatred of Trotskyism and were openly embracing the counterrevolutionary politics of the Soviet bureaucracy. Another example of the life-and-death character of the struggle being waged inside the Fourth



International was the position adopted by the Cochranites in the Seattle branch of the SWP. We quote from a report written to Farrell Dobbs by George Flint, a supporter of the SWP majority:

Sylvia, Bud, Roger and Jim O. finished neck and neck at our Thursday night's branch meeting, in their race to leave the party of revolutionary socialism and enter the party or the milieu of counter-revolutionary Stalinism.

Sylvia in her statement said that she repudiated all concepts of Trotskyism and considered the CP a historically revolutionary party.

Roger said that he was never fully integrated in the Trotskyist movement because he never considered the CP to be a counter-revolutionary tendency.

Bud said that after 6 years in the SWP he decided he must take himself out of the movement that is unreal with wishful thinking about the world today. Our party, he said, feeds on anti-communist sentiments of the masses.

They announced that they were also speaking for Jim O. He came in later after they had left and confirmed this.

In answer to a question at the meeting Sylvia said she considered the murder of the Left Oppositionists in the Soviet Union progressive and necessary because it served the needs of defense of the Soviet Union.<sup>13</sup>

The summer and early autumn of 1953 was the turning point in the struggle inside the Fourth International. The eruption of the general strike in France exposed the practical implications of the Pabloite line inside the workers' movement. Pablo opposed characterizing as a betrayal the role of the Stalinists in bringing the mass movement under control and heading off a revolutionary confrontation with the state. He merely accused them of a lack of policy. Moreover, Pablo's French supporters specifically endorsed the refusal of the Stalinist-controlled CGT trade unions to advance political demands.

The experience of the August general strike removed any lingering doubt that Pablo's call for deep entry into the Communist parties was part of a wholesale capitulation to Stalinism and the renunciation of Trotskyism.

Now confronting the direct opposition of Cannon to his right-wing line, Pablo's factional maneuvering assumed a

desperate and reckless character. Banda's denunciation of the "Open Letter" as "an arrogant ultimatum" turns historical truth upside down. In fact, Cannon's decision to make a public appeal to Trotskyists all over the world was taken to protect the physical existence of sections of the Fourth International. As Banda well knows, the most dangerous situation existed within Britain, where a faction headed by Lawrence, functioning under Pablo's direction, was threatening to destroy the organization unless Healy toed the Paris line and severed his political ties with Cannon.

In an extraordinary letter to Healy on September 23, 1953, Pablo warned that he would destroy Healy politically if the latter did not submit to Comintern-style discipline, keep his differences to himself, and support the International Secretariat against the Socialist Workers Party. The real "arrogant ultimatum" was delivered by Pablo, who instructed Healy:

a. To circumscribe strictly the struggle on the political plane of ideas, conducting yourself as a member above all of the IEC [International Executive Committee] and of the IS who defends until the 4th Wd. C. [World Congress] the majority line and the discipline of the International.

b. To cease to act as a member of the majority American faction and to await from it the political line to defend, and to cease to have circulated its documents in your faction in England, before you make known to the IS and to the IEC your eventual political divergences.

c. To abstain from any organizational measure in opposition to the comrades in your section who defend, as they ought, as you ought to do yourself first of all, the line and the discipline of the International.<sup>14</sup>

Cannon was stunned by this letter, which included an open threat that the IS would judge Healy "with an extreme severity" if he permitted any discussion of the opinions of the SWP within the British section. Having lived through the Stalinization of the Comintern, when a grotesque caricature of "international discipline" was used to suppress the discussion of Trotsky's views within the sections of the Third International, he was horrified by Pablo's attempt to revive these politically-corrupt practices inside the Fourth International. Pablo was demanding that Healy keep his mouth shut and accept the takeover of the British organization by a group

of pro-Stalinists led by Lawrence, who was already in close contact with the British Communist Party.

Cannon left Los Angeles for emergency discussions with the political committee in New York on the crisis within the Fourth International. On October 25, 1953 Farrell Dobbs, who was now supporting Cannon, sent Healy a detailed report which clearly explains how the SWP arrived at the decision to issue the "Open Letter" and establishes the completely principled basis of this document:

Since Jim's arrival in New York, we have been reviewing the trend of the international struggle and assessing the latest developments. We have read attentively all of your letters and they have had a profound influence on our thinking on the international question.

Most sinister of all is Pablo's ultimatum to you signifying his intention to move in and help the revisionist minority overthrow the majority in your party. We note that while launching this vicious attack on you, he remains much more cautious in his attitude toward us. There is a reason for that. He wants to keep us immobilized on the international arena and preoccupied with the struggle against our own revisionists to whom he has given only clandestine support, while he tries to cut to pieces, one at a time, your group and other orthodox Trotskyist groups.

We think the best service we can render the international movement is to cut through the whole web of Pabloite intrigue with an open challenge of their revisionist-liquidationist line. We think the time has come for an open appeal to the orthodox Trotskyists of the world to rally to save the Fourth International and throw out this usurping revisionist clique. The movement must be put on guard against the Pablo tactic of splits and expulsions, against his abuse of administrative control in an effort to repeat on an international scale their trick in France of overthrowing a majority with a minority.

In line with this decision to pass over from the defensive to the offensive, we are changing the whole character of the draft appeal we sent you. That draft limited itself to a description of revisionism in our party and Pablo's support of the revisionists, with an appeal for the aid of world orthodox Trotskyism in *our* fight. We now intend to issue from our Plenum an open manifesto to the world movement

sounding a call to arms against the Pabloites on the *international* field.

The manifesto will take as its point of departure the criminal policies of Pabloism with regard to the revolutionary events in East Germany, France, Iran, and the new developments in the Soviet Union. We will demonstrate that the lines of political cleavage have become so deep and the Pabloite organizational methods so alien to our movement that a *modus vivendi* is no longer possible. The conduct of the Pabloites shows they disdain the real relationship of forces in the movement. They act as though Pablo and his coterie own the international. The orthodox Trotskyists must kick out Pablo and the whole clique around him who leave no room for a *modus vivendi* apart from the complete submission to their criminal line.

It is necessary to recognize that a showdown cannot wait until the next Congress, as many had previously expected. The Pabloites have already shown by their actions in France and their movements and threats against you in Britain that they will not permit a democratic Congress. Their plan is to get rid of the orthodox Trotskyists before the Congress ever convenes. We must act now and act decisively. This means we must launch a counter-attack without delay. We can have no illusions that there can be a peaceful settlement or compromise with this gang.

This change in tactics, which has been unanimously decided on here, has arisen particularly from our deliberations of how we can best help you in your fight. As matters now stand, you are caught in a web of slanders and trumped-up legalisms that keep you on the defensive. You are compelled to fight on Pablo's ground with inexperienced comrades who can be taken in by his sowing of political confusion and his use of organizational intrigue.

A direct and open political challenge of Pablo by our Plenum turns everything around, cuts through his confusionist strategy and provides an excellent basis for you to pass over from the defensive to the offensive in support of our manifesto. You can thus quickly mobilize and arm for battle all the orthodox Trotskyists.

The fight we are now up against is no less vital and decisive for the future than the great battles waged 25 years ago, in which the original Trotskyist cadre were assembled. In the face of these political imperatives, petty scandals and organizational maneuvers pale into significance. Through

an uncompromising political challenge you will quickly weld your forces together in a faction which will become the future movement in England.

If we permit the fight to be conducted much further on the present level, you run the unavoidable risk of having demoralization and confusion disrupt your movement. And that is what we fear most at the present time.

We had a preliminary test of the effectiveness of this change of tactics at an internal debate on the French general strike here in New York last Thursday night. In this discussion for the first time we opened up on the sacred cow, Pablo. The Cochranites seemed surprised and shocked that we dared to do so, while our own forces were elated that the war with Pablo is finally out in the open. The Cochranite surprise at our slashing attack on Pablo tends to confirm our estimate that he thought we were afraid to join open battle with him. He thought that by playing a crafty double game with us, he could keep us immobilized in the international fight until he had finished doing a French job on the British party.

The most decisive factor about the debate was the eagerness with which our rank and file responded to the signal that we are opening war on Pabloite revisionism and liquidationism in the world movement. We think this healthy reaction will be duplicated everywhere in the movement among those who have not forgotten what Trotsky taught them and who, as you have mentioned several times, have been waiting for the SWP to speak.<sup>15</sup>

Throughout the summer of 1953, the Cochranites refused to acknowledge the authority of the SWP leadership and systematically sabotaged the work of the party. They refused, for example, to sell its press or raise funds. This antiparty campaign reached its climax on October 30, 1953, when the Cochranites in New York refused to attend a banquet called in honor of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the Trotskyist movement in the United States. This public boycott of the party by the Cochranites amounted to a split and the SWP leadership recognized it as such. At the plenum of the national committee of November 2-3, 1953, the SWP expelled Cochran, Clarke and all others who participated in the boycott.

Reviewing the history of the protracted struggle against Cochran, Cannon summed up the significance of the split in his closing speech to the national committee plenum:

Leadership is the one unsolved problem of the working class of the entire world. The only barrier between the working class of the world and socialism is the unsolved problem of leadership. That is what is meant by "the question of the party." That is what the *Transitional Program* means when it states that the crisis of the labor movement is the crisis of leadership. That means that until the working class solves the problem of creating the revolutionary party, the conscious expression of the historic process, which can lead the masses in struggle, the issue remains undecided. It is the most important of all questions — the question of the party.

And if our break with Pabloism — as we see it now clearly — if it boils down to one point and is concentrated in one point, that is it: the question of the party. That seems clear to us now, as we have seen the development of Pabloism in action. The essence of Pabloist revisionism is the overthrow of that part of Trotskyism which is today its most vital part — the conception of the crisis of mankind as the crisis of the leadership of the labor movement summed up in the question of the party.

Pabloism aims not only to overthrow Trotskyism; it aims to overthrow that part of Trotskyism which Trotsky learned from Lenin. Lenin's greatest contribution to his whole epoch was his idea and his determined struggle to build a vanguard party capable of leading the workers in revolution. And he did not confine his theory to the time of his own activity. He went all the way back to 1871, and said that the decisive factor in the defeat of the first proletarian revolution, the Paris Commune, was the absence of a party of the revolutionary Marxist vanguard, capable of giving the mass movement a conscious program and resolute leadership. It was Trotsky's acceptance of this part of Lenin in 1917 that made Trotsky a Leninist.

That is written into the *Transitional Program*, that Leninist concept of the decisive role of the revolutionary party. And that is what the Pabloites are throwing overboard in favor of the conception that the ideas will somehow filter into the treacherous bureaucracy, the Stalinists or reformists, and in some way or another, "In

the Day of the Comet," the socialist revolution will be realized and carried through to conclusion without a revolutionary Marxist, that is, a Leninist-Trotskyist party. That is the essence of Pabloism. Pabloism is the substitution of a cult and a revelation for a party and a program.<sup>16</sup>

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## James P. Cannon's "Open Letter"

For all the vehemence of Banda's denunciation of the "Open Letter," the readers of his "27 Reasons" will search in vain for any analysis of this document. He vilifies it as the "epistle from the philistines of 'orthodox Trotskyism,'" an "arrogant ultimatum," an "opportunist response" and an "equivocal and undignified maneuver." But he says nothing about the political content of the "Open Letter." He does not say whether he agrees or disagrees with its summation of the principles of Trotskyism, its characterization of Pablo's line as revisionist, or even its assertion that irreconcilable differences exist between Trotskyism and Pabloism. Nor does Banda explain why he personally supported the "Open Letter" in 1953.

Banda can write whatever he likes about Cannon. He can point to all his personal failings and his political limitations. But after having done all that, he has still to tell us what was unprincipled or revisionist in the political content of the "Open Letter." The fact that he has not done this demonstrates that his approach to the history of the Fourth International is subjective, unprincipled and reactionary.

When, in 1939 Shachtman, Abern and Burnham produced in their infamous document "War and Bureaucratic Conservatism" a lengthy catalog of Cannon's personal weaknesses, mistakes and crimes, Trotsky was totally unimpressed and uninterested. He replied, "Cannon represents the proletarian party in process of formation. The historical



right in this struggle — independent of what errors and mistakes might have been made — rests wholly on the side of Cannon.”<sup>1</sup>

Would it have been wrong to make the same assessment of the Cannon tendency in 1953? Did Pablo and Mandel now represent “the proletarian party in process of formation”? Aside from the errors and mistakes which are committed in every difficult and complex struggle by even the greatest Marxists, on what side was historical right to be found in 1953? Who represented, regardless of their personal failings, the class interests of the proletariat? Would the Fourth International have been strengthened had Cannon not fought the Cochranites, had he not challenged Pablo’s line, and had he not written the “Open Letter”? Would Trotskyism have flourished if Pablo’s “entryist” line of liquidation into the Stalinist parties had been carried out? Banda never poses such questions, for the answers would constitute a devastating refutation of his attack on the “Open Letter.” The fact that Banda denounces the “Open Letter” but says nothing at all about the liquidationist views against which Cannon was fighting proves that his attack is directed against Trotskyism itself.

Nearly 33 years after it was written, the “Open Letter” remains an outstanding and extraordinarily contemporary document. It summed up all the essential political questions raised in the struggle against Pabloite liquidationism. It began:

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....

As is well known, the pioneer American Trotskyists 25 years ago brought the program 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....

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 reconstitution 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 program of Trotskyism.

This faction, centered 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.

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 harbaric 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 favorable 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 wars 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 program, 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.<sup>2</sup>

Banda does not state what it is that he rejects in these formulations. He does not tell us whether he believes that they were wrong in 1953 or whether they have since become outdated. In these paragraphs Cannon reasserted the essential Trotskyist conceptions of the nature of the epoch, the revolutionary role of the working class, the crisis of revolutionary proletarian leadership, the counterrevolutionary role of Stalinism, and the necessity for the development of Marxist strategy and tactics in the struggle for state power. By his silence on this essential content of the "Open Letter," Banda serves notice that he no longer considers it even worthy of comment, for, he has gone beyond the "dogmatic fetishisms" of "orthodox" Trotskyism. Those who adopt such a haughty attitude to the principles of the Fourth International have "gone beyond" them indeed.

The "Open Letter" then proceeded to an analysis of Pablo's revision of Trotskyism:

These principles have been abandoned by Pablo. In place of emphasizing the danger of a new barbarism, he sees the drive toward 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 capacities 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 "program" of Trotskyism. Under guise of the diplomacy required in tactical maneuvers 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.<sup>3</sup>

The document examined the Pabloite response to crucial events in 1953, proving that in each instance, their policies represented a capitulation to the counterrevolutionary line of the Soviet bureaucracy.

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 maneuver 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 interbureaucratic 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 program of political revolution against the Kremlin bureaucracy with a new content; namely, the revisionist position that the "ideas" and "program" 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 counterrevolutionary 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 halfway. 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 [International Secretariat] 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?<sup>4</sup>

The fact that Banda does not tell us whether or not he agrees with this assessment of Pablo's capitulation to Stalinism on an event so crucial as the East German uprising, the historic precursor of the Hungarian Revolution, cannot be accidental. "Silence betokens consent." Banda says nothing about Pablo's monumental betrayals and directs his fire against those who denounced his political crimes. This can only mean that he now holds positions — or more correctly, he privately has held positions for a considerable period of time — that coincide with those of Pablo on the role of the Soviet bureaucracy.

The "Open Letter" then examined the Pabloite betrayal of the French general strike of August 1953.

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 favorable 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 labeled 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, their 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 counterrevolutionary 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.

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.<sup>5</sup>

Elsewhere in his "27 Reasons," Banda attacks the role played by the OCI in the events of May-June 1968, declaring that it "betrayed the general strike and impugned every tradition and principle of Trotskyism by its obdurate refusal to implement transitional demands and the struggle for power." But he says nothing about the far greater betrayal of the Pabloites in a similar situation in 1953. Rather, he attacks those who brought the Pabloite betrayal of the general strike to the attention of the international Trotskyist movement.

After completing its analysis of the role of the Pabloites in August 1953, the "Open Letter" dealt with the renegacy of the Cochranites:

The test of these world events is sufficient, in our opinion, to indicate the depth of Pabloite conciliationism toward 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-Shachtman 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 program. It has involved the perspective of the American revolution, the character and role of the revolutionary party and its method of organization, and the perspectives for the world Trotskyist movement.

During the post-war period a powerful bureaucracy consolidated itself in the American labor 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 these workers who previously were in the forefront of all militant class actions.



Cochranism is the manifestation of the pressure of this new labor 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.<sup>6</sup>

Banda prefers not to comment on this analysis of the Cochranites, precisely because their views correspond most closely to his own. More than 30 years before Banda, they denounced the "Open Letter," which, they claimed, was based on a "make-believe world" in which "the small nuclei will tomorrow become the mass revolutionary parties challenging all contenders and destroying them in battle."<sup>7</sup> They declared that the traditions and program of the Fourth International are "of no interest to the existing labor movements" and that "the revolutionary parties of tomorrow will not be Trotskyist, in the sense of necessarily accepting the tradition of our movement, our estimation of Trotsky's place in the revolutionary hierarchy, or all of Trotsky's specific evaluations and slogans."<sup>8</sup>

The "Open Letter" documented Pablo's abuse of authority, first of all exposing the way he secretly collaborated with Cochran and Clarke to build a revisionist tendency inside the SWP, while professing to oppose unprincipled factionalism. It dealt with Pablo's attempt to muzzle the leadership of the British section with a Comintern-style "committee disci-

pline." Finally, it documented the bureaucratic expulsion of the majority of the French section in 1952, with the SWP specifically acknowledging that it was wrong not to have intervened earlier against Pablo's unprecedented 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 programmatical in character. The fact is that the French comrades of the majority saw what was happening more clearly than we did....

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 Verité*, are the real Trotskyists of France and are so openly recognized by the SWP.<sup>9</sup>

Pablo's organizational methods were not the product of personal aberrations, but were bound up with the liquidationist line of the International Secretariat. As the role of the WRP inside the International Committee since the early 1970s has shown once again, the attempt to impose a liquidationist line upon the Fourth International invariably requires the use of base and factional methods against the Trotskyist cadre. Healy, Banda and Slaughter perfected the tricks which were used by Pablo 30 years earlier. Thus, it is not surprising that Banda prefers not to deal with Cannon's indictment of Pablo's organizational methods.

The "Open Letter" then dealt with one aspect of Pablo's opportunism that has received too little attention:

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 revolutionary representatives of the Chinese proletariat. Through no fault of theirs they have been singled out as victims by 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 Luxemburgs 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 gray tints on the firm, principled stand of our Chinese comrades.<sup>10</sup>

Though Banda says nothing about this passage, there is no doubt that on this question, he is in full agreement with Pablo. As is indicated by his earlier reference to the Fourth International's "total failure" to understand the Chinese Revolution, Banda believes that Maoism is not merely a viable alternative to Trotskyism; he is convinced, rather, that it represents an advance beyond the Fourth International. This position is rooted in his complete abandonment of the class standpoint of the revolutionary proletariat.

Banda's petty-bourgeois notion of revolution leaves out that element which is central to the entire Marxist concept of the class struggle, the dictatorship of the proletariat. Banda does indeed believe that "power comes out of the barrel of a gun," and this stupid aphorism — which contributes no more to the science of politics than it does to the science of ballistics — has been the theoretical underpinning of his belief that the armed struggle constitutes the fundamental strategy of Marxism.<sup>11</sup>

The "Open Letter" concluded:

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 maneuverism. But the qualitative point of change has been reached. The political issues have broken through the maneuvers 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 to 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.<sup>12</sup>

A principled challenge to the legitimacy of the "Open Letter" would have to demonstrate that Cannon's characterization of the "lines of cleavage between Pablo's revisionism and orthodox Trotskyism" was either exaggerated or entirely false. Banda would have to demonstrate that a compromise was both possible and desirable in the interests of the working class. Because he cannot do this on the basis of an honest presentation of the historical record, Banda is forced, once again, to lie in the most brazen fashion. Thus, he makes the incredible declaration, "I challenge North and his flunkies in the IC to produce a single document, resolution or memorandum which sought to explain theoretically the causes and origins of the split. *He will find none.* That is the greatest indictment of the IC and that is why, I for one, will treat his invocation of IC authority with the contempt, pity and anger it deserves." (Banda's emphasis.)

The literary output surrounding the 1953 struggle compares extremely favorably with the two splits inside the Workers Revolutionary Party with which Michael Banda was

directly associated: the 1974 expulsion of Alan Thornett and the 1985 break with Healy. The entire Thornett affair lasted little more than six weeks. Banda, in that fight, claimed to have "unmasked" Thornett's "Menshevism" with just one brief document that will be remembered only for its defense of the majority's right to change the party's constitution in accordance with the factional needs of the leadership. As for the 1985 bloodbath, Banda proclaimed proudly that "the party has been split not on tactical and programmatic issues, but on the most basic question of revolutionary morality."<sup>13</sup>

In contrast, few political struggles have been so exhaustively documented as the 1953 split inside the Fourth International. Banda's "challenge" is easily disposed of. The publication of all the documents between 1951 and 1954, tracing the origins of Pabloism and the development of the split, would require several volumes totaling well over 1,000 pages.

There were, in fact, scores of documents, resolutions, memoranda and letters in which the cadre of the Trotskyist movement, especially inside the Socialist Workers Party, were able to carefully follow all of the political issues which arose after the Third World Congress.

Among the most important documents analyzing Pablo's revisionist conceptions of Stalinism were Morris Stein's "Some Remarks on 'The Rise and Fall of Stalinism,'" and John G. Wright's "Memorandum on 'The Rise and Decline of Stalinism.'" Together, these two documents represented a crushing refutation of Pablo's "new world reality" and demonstrated that he had completely repudiated the essential programmatic conceptions upon which the founding of the Fourth International was based.

The "Open Letter" of November 1953, which, as we have seen, summed up in extremely concise form the central issues of principle, program and organization involved in the split, was followed by the more detailed document of the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Plenum of the SWP, entitled "Against Pabloist Revisionism."

Another major document, which exposed Pablo's criminal abuse of the Chinese Trotskyist movement and his obscene

adaptation to Maoism, was Peng Shu-tse's "The Chinese Experience with Pabloite Revisionism and Bureaucratism."

As was common inside the Fourth International, many crucial documents were initially prepared in the form of letters. Cannon's voluminous correspondence with Sam Gordon, Gerry Healy, Leslie Goonewardene and George Breitman are not only an invaluable historical record of the split, but also provide profound insights into the political and historical issues at stake in the struggle against Pabloism.

Among the most important letters is that which Cannon wrote on February 23, 1954 to Leslie Goonewardene, the secretary of the Lanka Sama Samaja Party of Ceylon. This letter is particularly relevant to Banda's denunciation of the "Open Letter." Although Banda does not care to make this known, his present-day attack on the "Open Letter" is written partially as a belated defense of the unprincipled position adopted by the LSSP in relation to the split with the Pabloites. Banda's invocation of organizational criteria to attack the "Open Letter" (i.e., it "did nothing to alter the line of forces") simply repeats the line taken by the LSSP.

For reasons bound up with the political situation in Ceylon, the LSSP strongly sympathized with those aspects of the liquidationist line of Pablo which sanctioned its own increasingly open adaptation to the bourgeois nationalist parties. Although it was still critical of Pablo's line on Stalinism, the LSSP did not want an international struggle against centrism inside the Fourth International that threatened to cut across its search for alliances with forces like Bandaranaike's MEP. Thus, the LSSP passed a resolution which opposed the "Open Letter."

While reassuring Cannon that the LSSP remained opposed to any trace of Stalinist conciliationism within its own section, Goonewardene employed a series of lawyer's arguments to justify the LSSP's opposition to the "Open Letter." He called on Cannon to pull back from the split with the Pabloites and attend the scheduled Fourth World Congress.

The evolution of the LSSP over the next decade was to expose the organic connection between its opposition to the struggle against Pabloism and its steady movement toward popular frontism. Cannon clearly sensed that Goonewar-

dene's position expressed a weakening of the Trotskyist convictions of the LSSP, and, despite the generally respectful and comradely tone of the letter, his concern was apparent. While congratulating the LSSP for its struggle against a pro-Stalinist tendency within its own ranks, he reminded Goonewardene, "As internationalists, it is obligatory that we take the same attitude toward open or covert manifestations of Stalinist conciliationism *in other parties, and in the international movement generally.*"<sup>14</sup> (Cannon's emphasis.)

After delivering this pointed rebuke, Cannon explained the significance of the split:

A realistic approach to the present crisis must take as its point of departure the recognition that the Fourth International is no longer a politically homogeneous organization. The issues of the factional struggle are matters of principle which put the Trotskyist movement squarely before the question: To be or not to be. The attempt to revise the accepted Trotskyist analysis of the nature of Stalinism and the Lenin-Trotsky theory of the party, and thereby in effect, to deprive the Trotskyist parties and the Fourth International as a whole of any historical justification for independent existence, is at the bottom of the present crisis in our international movement. In connection with this as a highly important, although subordinate issue, matters of organizational principle — not merely procedure, but principle — are also involved.

There is no way to get around the fact that we are up against a revisionist tendency which extends from basic theory to political action and organizational practice. We have not imagined this tendency or invented it; we simply recognize the reality. We have become convinced of this reality only after the most thorough deliberation and consideration of the trend of the Pablo faction, as we have seen it manifested in its concrete actions as well as in its crafty theoretical formulations and omissions. We have declared open war on this tendency because we know that it can lead to nothing else but the destruction of our movement; and because we believe that silence on our part would be a betrayal of our highest duty: that is, our duty to the international movement....

We are fighting now in fulfillment of the highest duty and obligation which we undertook when we came to Trotsky

and the Russian Opposition 25 years ago. That is the obligation to put international considerations first of all and above all; to concern ourselves with the affairs of the international movement and its affiliated parties; help them in every way we can; to give them the benefit of our considered opinions, and to seek in return their advice and counsel in the solution of our own problems. *International collaboration is the first principle of internationalism.* We learned that from Trotsky. We believe it, and we are acting according to our belief....

The first concern of Trotskyists always has been, and should be now, the defense of our doctrine. That is the first principle. The second principle, giving life to the first, is the protection of the historically-created cadres against any attempt to disrupt or disperse them. At the best, formal unity stands third in the order of importance.

The cadres of the "old Trotskyists" represent the accumulated capital of the long struggle. *They are the carriers of the doctrine*; the sole human instruments now available to bring our doctrine — the element of socialist consciousness — into the mass movement. The Pablo camarilla set out deliberately to disrupt these cadres, one by one, in one country after another. And we set out, no less deliberately — after too long a delay — to defend the cadres against this perfidious attack. Our sense of responsibility to the international movement imperatively required us to do so. Revolutionary cadres are not indestructible. The tragic experience of the Comintern taught us that.<sup>15</sup> (Cannon's emphasis.)

These lines — and, more decisively, the whole content of the SWP's political work in 1953-54 — give the lie to Banda's allegation that "Cannon and the SWP abandoned even the pretense of building the Fourth International by 1950." As we have already demonstrated on the basis of the historical record, Cannon's struggle against Pabloism was the highpoint of his life as a Marxist revolutionary and proletarian internationalist. Out of the battle against a right-wing tendency which reflected the enormous pressures of American imperialism upon the SWP, Cannon mounted an international offensive against revisionism inside the Fourth International, preserved the heritage of Trotskyism and extended it into the future.



The 1953 struggle against Pabloism was, perhaps, the "last hurrah" of this great, though fallible, fighter for Trotskyism. While his later retreats cannot be excused, they in no way detract from what Cannon achieved in defending the continuity of the world movement in 1953-54. Those who would deny that do not measure up to Cannon's ankles.

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## After the Split

After the 1963 reunification, the SWP and its revisionist allies in Europe all set out to dismiss the 1953 split as an unfortunate misunderstanding that should never have happened. Joseph Hansen, in 1962, lamented the “unconscionable eight years”<sup>1</sup> of the split. The very existence of Pabloism as a definite international revisionist tendency was denied. Insofar as the term “Pabloism” had any political meaning for the SWP, it stood merely for unpleasant bureaucratic methods in the sphere of international organization.

The SWP sought to conceal the objective political significance of the change in its own political attitude toward Pabloism. In 1953, it had organized an international split against the Pabloite-controlled International Secretariat. In 1963, the SWP forced through a reunification with those it had vehemently denounced as revisionists, and broke with the International Committee.

An analysis of the crucial decade which followed the “Open Letter” establishes that the reunification of 1963 was the end product of the capitulation of Cannon and the Socialist Workers Party to the pressures of American imperialism. The transformation of the SWP from a party of social revolution into a party of social reform — infested, moreover, by agents of the capitalist state in its central leadership — was the essential content of the process recorded in its repudiation of the principles for which it had fought in 1953. The reunification marked the end of the 25-year existence of the SWP as a Trotskyist party.

Banda avoids an objective study of the 1953-63 period because it goes right to the heart of the crucial question of historical continuity. To trace the degeneration of the SWP and the opposition to it which arose inside the International Committee is to examine how Trotskyism was defended and developed in the struggle against revisionism, that is, in battle against the social, political and ideological forms of the pressures exerted by imperialism upon the Fourth International. Such a study proves that in its struggle against the unprincipled reunification proposed by the SWP, the International Committee defended the historic interests of the international working class.

Such an examination of the struggles of the Fourth International as an objective part of the international class struggle is of no interest to Banda. Rather, his method is always subjective. To deny the historic significance of the "Open Letter," he denounces the supposed crimes of Cannon before 1953, which, as we have seen, are based on malicious lies and fabrications. To deny the historic implications of the struggle waged against the reunification, Banda fastens upon the errors made by Healy in relation to Algeria in 1955-57. In addition to a bit of dishonest self-promotion, the Algerian events are cited by Banda to prove that there existed no real differences between the SWP and the British and French Trotskyists; rather, they were all part of the same politically degenerate international movement that had been decaying from almost the very moment that Trotsky founded the Fourth International in 1938. Whatever the importance of these errors on the Algerian struggle for the biography of Healy and the general historical record, they do not alter the objective revolutionary content of the struggle against the SWP's betrayal of Trotskyism.<sup>2</sup>

In order to minimize the significance of the SWP abandonment of the struggle against Pabloism, Banda suggests that the "Open Letter" was a minor incident that was immediately forgotten by Cannon: "True to form Cannon, having established his own freedom to manoeuvre with the labour bureaucracy and having disposed of the Cochranite nuisance, was now prepared to do business with Pablo on the basis of

a common stand on the Hungarian Revolution and a watering down of the program of political revolution in the USSR."

It is not necessary to repeat our exposure of Banda's lie that in the struggle against Cochran-Clarke, Cannon represented the American trade union bureaucracy. What we would like to point out, instead, is that between the "Open Letter" and the Hungarian Revolution a period of no less than three years elapsed during which the SWP consistently and irreconcilably, in all its public statements and in correspondence within the Fourth International, denounced Pabloism and opposed all political relations with its representatives. In brushing this fact aside, Banda joins all the centrists and revisionists who, like the SWP, prefer to treat the 1953 split as a sort of *nonevent*.

The SWP placed for a period of more than three years enormous stress on the significance of the struggle against Pabloism. Considering all that the SWP leaders had written on the subject between 1953 and 1956, the British section of the IC was entirely correct to see the SWP's sudden change in attitude toward the prospects for reunification with the Pabloites as a profoundly disquieting development.

In the early months of 1954, Cannon continued the political offensive against the Pabloites, defining the political and historical significance of the split. On March 1, 1954, he wrote to George Breitman:

Our objective is fundamentally different from Germain's. In the last resort, it traces back to a different theory of the role of the revolutionary vanguard, and its relation to other tendencies in the labor movement. Germain thinks he is orthodox on this question — he even wrote an article about it in *Quatrieme Internationale* — but in practice he compromises the theory. We alone are unconditional adherents of the Lenin-Trotsky theory of the party of the conscious vanguard and its role as leader of the revolutionary struggle. This theory acquires burning actuality and dominates all others in the present epoch.

The problem of leadership now is not limited to spontaneous manifestations of the class struggle in a long drawn-out process, nor even to the conquest of power in this or that country where capitalism is especially weak. It is a question of the development of the *international* revolution

and the socialist transformation of society. To admit that this can happen automatically is, in effect, to abandon Marxism altogether. No, it can only be a *conscious* operation, and it imperatively requires the leadership of the Marxist party which represents the conscious element in the historic process. No other party will do. No other tendency in the labor movement can be recognized as a satisfactory substitute. For that reason, our attitude towards all other parties and tendencies is irreconcilably hostile.

If the relation of forces requires the adaptation of the cadres of the vanguard to organizations dominated at the moment by such hostile tendencies — Stalinist, Social Democratic, centrist — then such adaptation must be regarded at all times as a *tactical* adaptation, to facilitate the struggle against them; never to effect a reconciliation with them; never to ascribe to them the decisive historical role, with the Marxists assigned to the minor chore of giving friendly advice and “loyal” criticism, in the manner of the Pabloite comments on the French General Strike.

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Germain doesn't know it, but at bottom our differences with him are the same as our differences with Shachtman and Pablo in this domain. Germain offers us an “entrism” policy; he wants us to content ourselves with the position of a critical opposition in a Pabloite International, just as Pablo, implicitly, would reduce the Fourth International to the role of a critical wing of Stalinism, and as Shachtman explicitly advises the revolutionary vanguard to be satisfied with the ignoble destiny of a “loyal opposition” — the formulation is Shachtman's — to the Social Democracy....

The Fourth International, in the present stage of its evolution and development, is not a mass organization in which different and even antagonistic tendencies could accommodate themselves to each other for a long time, while the struggle continues for the allegiance of the masses in its ranks. *The Fourth International today is a cadre organization.* Its striking power and historical justification derive from its program and its ideological homogeneity. Pabloism is not a mass movement to be penetrated and influenced, but a revisionist tendency which discredits the Fourth International and disrupts its cadres. The revolutionary task is not to “live with” this tendency — which, moreover, is a minority tendency — but to blow it up.

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As I visualize the next stage of our strategy, it should proceed from the uncompromising determination to annihilate Pabloism politically and organizationally. This will take time, and we should adjust our thinking to a drawn-out struggle along three lines, in the following order of importance.

First: to consolidate and re-educate the cadres already supporting the International Committee.

Second: to secure the organizational alignment with the International Committee of those sections already in substantial political agreement with us, or still undecided.

Third: to consolidate minorities in those sections whose top leadership is already corrupted by Pabloism, and arm them for an irreconcilable struggle.

I attach the greatest importance to the first point: The consolidation and ideological hardening of the ranks of the orthodox cadre. As I see it, the polemical material we are turning out is intended mainly for their benefit, to involve them in the discussion and assist them to move forward with us consciously at every step. We should look back to the early days of our movement and recall that our voluminous polemics against the Stalinists were not merely a debate with them; they were the means whereby our own basic cadres were educated and consolidated.

We should deliberately aim to accomplish the same results again this time on a higher level. This is very important for us in the SWP, for it is obvious that our party is being rebuilt from the bottom up in the course of this discussion. It is ten times more important for such organizations as the Canadian and the British, and others who are obliged by circumstances to follow a policy of "deep entry".<sup>3</sup>

Cannon, clearly recognizing that the emergence of Pabloite revisionism reflected the pressure of imperialism upon the entire Fourth International and that liquidationism was a real danger even within those sections who were identified as "orthodox" Trotskyists, repeatedly stressed the necessity for a thoroughgoing reeducation of the rank and file in the struggle against revisionism. He not only called for "merciless polemics against the Pabloites," but also warned that these literary attacks "will be partly wasted if the polemical material is confined only to the leading circles and is not

widely distributed in the ranks, and studied and discussed by them. Otherwise, Pabloism, the end result of which can only be a liquidation of the Trotskyist cadres, could eventually gain the victory by default, even though the cadres formally renounce the Pabloite faction."<sup>4</sup>

On April 24, 1954, in a letter to Dobbs, Cannon stepped up the offensive against the Pabloites. Commenting on the attitude taken by the Pabloites toward elections in Indochina and the admission of China into the UN, Cannon wrote:

What struck me in the eye, on reading this Pabloite declaration, is that here *for the first time* they have openly thrown aside the Trotskyist program of revolutionary internationalism in favor of the pacifist diplomatic formulas of the Stalinists. This is not a mistake or an oversight but a calculated betrayal of our program, published in the name of the Fourth International.

Here Pabloism takes off the mask and shows its real face. And all those who want to see, can see the reason why they chose this occasion for self-revelation. The same April 9 session of the Pabloite IS, which issued this infamous declaration, made the decision to formalize the split with the Trotskyists who remain faithful to the program of revolutionary internationalism. The two actions fit together. The Pabloites had to cut the last thread connecting them with the Trotskyists before they felt free to dispense with diplomatic formulations and openly reveal their real program.

We will see more of this from now on, and everything will become clear to everybody. Our interest on the international field henceforth is not to haggle over organizational formalities and technicalities with the Pabloite scoundrels, but to consolidate the forces of international Trotskyism in the struggle to defend the program of the Fourth International and to cleanse its banner of the Stalinist filth splotched upon it by the Pabloite gang...

All questions of organizational formalities and technicalities, whether right or wrong in any given instance, which previously may have been a fit subject for discussion among the forces of orthodox Trotskyism, are washed out and worthless now. Nothing counts from now on but the lines of political principle which divide the Trotskyists from Stalinist agents and apologists. The realignment of the international movement can only take place on that basis.

This is the real state of affairs and we must proceed from it. Nothing else matters now.<sup>5</sup>

Following the split, there were discussions within the International Committee over how to prosecute the struggle against the Pabloites most effectively. Cannon, correctly, placed the central emphasis on the need to consolidate the ranks of the orthodox Trotskyists on the basis of an unrelenting political and theoretical struggle against the revisionists. He ruled out political or organizational concessions in the name of a specious unity; and looked askance at proposals for further discussions with the revisionists that threatened to undercut the essential political struggle.

There was another element in the political equation that complicated the struggle against the Pabloites. The Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP), the Ceylonese section of the Fourth International, had opposed the split on what appeared to be purely organizational grounds. Making use of a ploy that is the stock-in-trade of centrists, it claimed to be totally opposed to Pablo's revisions of the Trotskyist program, but argued that the issuing of the "Open Letter" was a mistake. The subsequent evolution of the LSSP would eventually expose the reactionary political outlook which motivated their objections to the split. In fact, the LSSP leaders did not want any struggle waged against centrism inside the Fourth International for the simple reason that it would inevitably cut across the opportunist line they were developing in Ceylon.

The attitude of the LSSP made the position of the orthodox Trotskyists more difficult. Their opposition to the split bolstered Pablo, and their claims to be opposed to his line cynically encouraged false hopes that the LSSP could be won over to the "orthodox Trotskyists" once the political issues were made clear. Before the two-faced game of the LSSP was finally exposed, a great deal of energy was unnecessarily expended attempting to satisfy the organizational sensibilities of the Ceylonese. This is how the issue of a parity committee arose for the first time in 1954. The LSSP argued for the creation of an organizational medium through which the consummation of an irrevocable split could be avoided and a world congress of all factions held.



In February 1954, Cannon informed the LSSP that he did not believe that a world congress could heal a split provoked by irreconcilable political differences. He opposed the conception that the Fourth International could exist as an all-inclusive umbrella organization for disparate organizations. But Cannon did not reject the LSSP proposals outright. Following the publication of the LSSP's critique of Pablo's "Rise and Decline of Stalinism" — in which the Ceylonese acknowledged that the Pabloites' "single governing concept ... not only leads to a fundamental revision of the positions of Trotskyism in regard to Stalinism but also denies to the Trotskyist movement all justification for its continued existence" — Cannon was persuaded that the Ceylonese party might be won over to the International Committee.

He reconsidered the LSSP's proposal for the formation of a parity committee in which formal exchanges between the International Secretariat and the IC could be organized in preparation for a unified Fourth World Congress. But he warned Leslie Goonewardene in a letter dated May 12, 1954 that "all attempts to begin a reunification process on the organizational level, without a full clarification of the political questions involved, and without a real will on both sides to effect unification despite political differences, clearly established and recognized, have ended in failure."<sup>6</sup>

The Pabloites went ahead, despite the formal opposition of the LSSP, with their plans for an independent Fourth World Congress. This simply confirmed the irrevocable nature of the split. Nevertheless, the LSSP continued to press for a parity committee. During the summer of 1954, Colvin De Silva and Goonewardene met with Healy in London and convinced him to accept their proposal.

Healy had not yet seen through the duplicity of the LSSP and, in a letter written jointly with Sam Gordon, dated July 8, 1954, urged Cannon to accept the parity committee proposal of the Ceylonese:

They asked us to do this [accept their proposal for the formation of a parity commission] "to help them organize the fight" (their literal words). While maintaining their formal connections with Pablo they unquestionably see as their perspective, collaboration with us.

After considerable thought we don't see what else we can reasonably do except propose acceptance of their proposition to the IC. What could we possibly lose by agreeing? We obligate ourselves to nothing except to meet. We reserve our complete freedom of action. The only thing we do is to provide a vehicle which enables us to have a formal link with the Ceylonese, which they very much want, and which is their prime consideration in the immediate sense.<sup>7</sup>

In a letter to Cannon July 14, 1954, Dobbs urged him to accept the LSSP proposals as advised in the above letter by Healy and Gordon, despite the fact that Pablo had gone ahead with his bogus Fourth Congress.

We now face the question: Shall we insist that the act of proclaiming the "Fourth Congress" consummates a definitive split, or shall we accept the Ceylonese proposal to form a parity commission for the organization of a joint discussion and preparation of a joint conference?...

We would be wholly justified in taking a stand that the decision of the rump gathering to proclaim itself the "Fourth Congress" had made the split definitive. However, if we were to refuse on this ground to have any relations with those elements at the rump congress who are subject to attraction by the IC, we would be setting up organizational barriers that would help keep them in Pablo's revisionist-liquidationist net.<sup>8</sup>

Cannon reluctantly accepted the proposal, but within a few months, he reversed himself, arguing against any organizational initiatives that might suggest a turn toward the reunification of the Trotskyists and Pabloites. In a letter to Healy December 8, 1954, Dobbs wrote:

Looking back upon recent events we now feel we made a mistake in orienting toward establishment of a parity commission with the Pabloites no matter on how limited a basis. Illusions can be created that become an obstacle to the realization of our fundamental objectives.

Beginning with the *Open Letter*, the forces rallied around the International Committee have denounced Pabloism as a revisionist-liquidationist tendency guilty of: junking the Transitional Program; renouncing the inevitability of political revolution against the Stalinist bureaucracy and visualizing its self-reform; covering up Stalinist betrayals; adopting a conciliatory attitude toward alien political

tendencies generally; liquidating the movement through "deep" entry tactics; organizing a secret personal faction; suppressing democratic discussion inside the movement; gagging leading comrades in the executive bodies and in the sections; carrying through minority-provoked splits and bureaucratic expulsions — all as part of a conspiracy to achieve these revisionist-liquidationist aims through a minority coup d'état at a rump congress.<sup>9</sup>

In later years, the SWP would treat the split as if it had all been a mistake, but Dobbs's letter, written more than one year after the split, shows the stress that the SWP initially placed on the struggle against Pabloism.

The split with Pabloism is therefore already definitive and what remains is a mopping-up operation to save whatever confused elements we can, accepting unity only with those elements who are prepared to break definitively with everything Pabloism stands for. Thus, in the most basic sense the problem is not one of unification. Our task is to consolidate the forces that have broken with Pablo and carry the split deeper into the Pabloite ranks.<sup>10</sup>

Dobbs's conclusive judgment on the finality of the split was premature, as events were later to demonstrate. Moreover, there is reason to believe that Cannon's sudden objection to the parity commission may well have been at least partly motivated by the realization that the ranks of the SWP were not as homogeneous as he had claimed in his correspondence. It is more than likely that Cannon suspected that a protracted discussion on the nature of Pabloism would expose the existence of potent revisionist tendencies inside the SWP leadership. There existed the danger, therefore, that any sort of organizational relations with the International Secretariat would provide Pablo with yet another opportunity to fish for supporters inside the troubled waters of the SWP.

Certainly, the split did not resolve the political problems that had been revealed in the earlier reluctance of many SWP leaders, such as Dobbs, to accept the necessity of a fight against the Cochranites. By late 1954, there were already ominous signals of a deepening political crisis within the SWP. Nevertheless, whatever the ulterior motives of Cannon and other leaders, their analysis of Pabloism was absolutely correct and their general conclusions were wholly justified.

The notion of a parity commission serves at most as simply a device for marking time before the definitive split with Pabloism is made openly in the fullest formal sense. Time is on our side in the task of clarifying the confused and hesitant elements who remain identified to some degree with the Pabloite formal structure. The gratifying developments you report in Germany and Italy underline this fact. But we must be careful not to feed any illusions among the Ceylonese, Germans, Italians or others that there can be any long cohabitation with the Pabloites. These comrades must not get the idea that they can avoid a clean break with Pabloism with the expectation that we will be coming back into the old setup on the basis of a *modus vivendi* with Pablo....

Our platform permits no common executive body with the Pabloites. It requires just the opposite since our stress is on the consolidation of the Trotskyist forces and a definitive separation from Pabloism. Hence nothing of an executive character gives any urgency to a parity commission meeting. Our documents will not be designed for "common" discussion with the Pabloites but for clarification of the Trotskyists and the elaboration of the Trotskyist platform. We have nothing to negotiate with the Pabloites concerning the character and scope of discussion material.<sup>11</sup>

In his reply to Dobbs, December 16, 1954, Healy argued for the continuation of the parity commission, noting,

"The Pabloite ranks still contain some very important elements whom we do not desire to see demoralized as a result of the impasse of Pabloism....

The Ceylonese are an essential part of our world movement as well as the Bolivians and Latin Americans, and they *remain inside* Pablo's organization. In my opinion, some of them (Ceylonese) are very close to us and must be won to orthodox Trotskyism. That is an urgent and inescapable task. It is also a reason which leads me to conclude that the fight is by no means over, and that we cannot rely on time alone for the very good reason that an international stalemate has existed now since June. The international movement to-day has no overall political perspective."<sup>12</sup>

Though Healy soon withdrew his objections, the SWP leadership strongly argued against the idea that the ICFI

should accept a parity committee in order to placate the Ceylonese. In a letter to IC Secretary Gerard Bloch February 12, 1955, Dobbs wrote:

Some tactical differences have manifested themselves on the best way to deal with the Ceylonese and other conciliators. We believe, however, that those differences are largely episodic and are mostly due to misunderstanding.

How shall we treat this problem of the conciliators? Their only concern is to avoid taking a clear stand and they think they can do it by working out a formula for a *modus vivendi* between the Trotskyists and the Pabloites. But there is no such *modus vivendi* possible. The organizations affiliated with the IC have categorically rejected Pabloite political and organizational methods. They had first-hand experience in bitter, irreconcilable struggle and splits with Pablo's agents in their own ranks.

They are fully aware of the great harm Pabloism has done to the world movement and are in no mood to soften up on this question.

The truth is that if we had thought out the parity committee question to the end when the proposal was first made, it would have been rejected at that time. There are many reasons for rejecting this proposal, but not the least of them is that it should have been rejected for the good of the Ceylonese. The best way to deal with the Ceylonese is to make them realize beyond a doubt that there is no room for maneuvers between the Trotskyists and the Pabloites. From this point of view, the parity committee is not an aid but a hindrance in winning the Ceylonese to unqualified support of the IC.<sup>13</sup>

During the months that followed, the most persistent advocate of the parity committee and other unity tactics was the Chinese Trotskyist, Peng Shu-tse, who was the captive of the illusion that Pabloism was merely a passing illness within the Fourth International. Despite the strong criticisms Peng had made of Pabloism, he underestimated the danger it represented. The refusal of various sections to break with Pabloism was seen by Peng as an unfortunate mistake that could be easily rectified if only the ICFI accepted a parity commission. His illusions were revealed in a letter he wrote to Farrell Dobbs on September 8, 1955:

The LSSP is completely a Trotskyist party politically. (Moreover it is a party in our movement which really has a mass base.) This fact is acknowledged by all. The reason that they still remain in the IS is only that they are confined by formalism organizationally, but they earnestly desire to have a general discussion through the parity committee in order to sweep away Pablo's revisionism and reunify all the Trotskyists. Until now the Indian Trotskyists have not yet expressed their attitude, but because of the traditionally close connection they have with the LSSP, it probably is under the influence of the latter.<sup>14</sup>

Peng's confidence in the LSSP, which was bound up with his failure to understand the class roots of Pabloism, was expressed even more sharply in a letter to Healy December 15, 1955, in which he objected to the British leader's criticism of the Ceylonese movement. The LSSP, he insisted,

has not only politically maintained the Trotskyist traditional position, but is the only section in our movement which has a true mass base and has effectively led nationwide mass movement. Precisely so, it has won prestige among all Trotskyists in the world, particularly the comrades in the Orient. Our main task should be encouragement and help towards her (without omitting any correct criticism), and attempting to collaborate closely with her, for the development of the Trotskyist movement in the Orient.<sup>15</sup>

In a letter dated January 30, 1956, Dobbs replied harshly to Peng's lawyer-like appeals on behalf of the LSSP:

We note that the LSSP continues to press for a Parity Committee to organize a discussion and prepare a unity conference. Assuming a fake pose as unifiers, the Pabloites are pressing the issue and seeking to brand the IC as "splitters" for not accommodating them on the Parity Committee demand. The LSSP has aided the Pabloite demagoguery by censuring the IC for its attitude on the Parity Committee question and has indicated that it will continue to stand aloof from the political struggle....

Naturally the IC should work to win the support of orthodox Trotskyists who remain entrapped by Pablo. But it would be dangerous to maneuver with the question of unity in order to save a few people who have gotten left

showdown with the Pabloites. Real unity is conceivable only with those who are ready to make a clean and open break with Pabloism organizationally as well as politically. It would be a mistake to think that formal discussion through a Parity Committee will enable them to solve the contradiction between their political opinions and their organizational affiliations....

The Parity Committee actually gets in the way of influencing the orthodox Trotskyists who remain ensnared by Pablo and lends weight to the notion that they can avoid a definitive break with Pabloism. It connotes a trend toward reunification when the task of political clarification is far from completed. It opens the way to new Pabloite maneuvers and helps sow new political confusion.

We think it would be a mistake to adapt our tactical course to the policies of the LSSP. They are straddling in the international political struggle. Their course aids Pablo tactically and adds to the political confusion. It represents a political default on their part.

At the rump congress the LSSP voted for Pablo's main resolution as amended by the incorporation of their criticisms of it. This was a disorienting political compromise that contradicts the struggle for a principled political line based on Trotskyist fundamentals. They have evaded forthright repudiation of Pabloism and now stand aloof from the political struggle awaiting the "documents of both sides."

It is not simply through a misunderstanding that the comrades of the LSSP take a vacillating position as conciliators. Their tactics appear to flow from a policy of national opportunism. We think it best to drop all maneuvers with them and firmly characterize their error. At the same time we should continue to send the LSSP our documents.

An examination of the reasons for their conciliationist attitude will only underline the need for us to stand firm against their conciliationist approach. They have had no Pabloite faction to deal with. Hence they have not had your and our direct internal experience which helped so much to fully perceive the Pabloite danger. They are generally remote from the international factional struggle and they are preoccupied with the problems of their own mass movement. They manifest a desire to be left alone while

some form of *modus vivendi* is worked out between Pablo and the IC that would at least postpone a showdown.

We think the LSSP will take a forthright political stand only to the extent they are given no room to maneuver. Hence, the Parity Committee becomes not an aid but a hindrance to winning them to unqualified support of the IC. We fully share your desire to collaborate with them to develop the Trotskyist movement in the Orient. But if our ultimate political objectives are to be realized, that collaboration must be based on a principled political line and a corresponding general organizational course.<sup>16</sup>

Dobbs rejected Peng's argument that ferment in the ranks of the French Communist Party was a reason to find an organizational solution to the problem of Pabloite revisionism.

Important as it is to take political advantage of the ferment in the French Stalinist ranks, as you have stressed, it is even more important to have a clear, correct political line for this work which must be shaped in the discussion among the IC supporters. To overleap the IC discussion through a Parity Committee tactic would in our opinion merely compound confusion in the French situation and still further reduce our chances of doing effective work among the Stalinists.

For all the reasons stated, we see no useful function for a Parity Committee at the present time. We think it would actually do harm. We propose instead the following general course of procedure:

1. Clarify and consolidate our political positions through a full and free exchange of views among the co-thinkers associated with the IC.
2. As a definitive line is hammered out in the IC, seek to win the orthodox Trotskyists still entrapped by Pablo, getting our documents to them through general publication and by direct contact where feasible.
3. Work toward the unification of all orthodox Trotskyists based on: common political positions and correct organizational relations; repudiation of the Pabloite revisionist policies and organizational methods.<sup>17</sup>

These letters underscore the magnitude of the political change that was indicated in March 1957 when Cannon, in reply to yet another epistle from L. Goonewardene, suggested



for the first time that the SWP might agree to an organizational settlement of the split without a political resolution of the issues which had given rise to the 1953 struggle. For more than three years, the SWP had insisted upon the irrevocable nature of the break with Pabloism, maintained that the lessons of the split constituted the foundation for the reeducation of the entire international cadre, and declared repeatedly that no compromise with the revisionists was possible. And yet, without prior discussion within the IC, the SWP suddenly changed its position. The British section of the ICFI, which had withdrawn its support for a parity committee in 1954 at the behest of Cannon and Dobbs, was entirely justified in viewing the SWP's overtures to the LSSP and the Pabloites with alarm.

To understand the significance of this shift, it is necessary to examine more carefully what had been taking place within the SWP between 1954 and 1957. Only in this way can the relation between the class struggle in the United States, the political degeneration of the SWP, and the drive toward an unprincipled reunification be concretely understood.

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## The SWP and McCarthyism

Despite the expulsion of the Cochranite faction in the autumn of 1953, the political crisis inside the Socialist Workers Party had not been resolved. After the split, the SWP had still to contend with the unfavorable objective conditions. The rising living standards of millions of trade unionists, to which Cannon had pointed as a material source of the opportunism and liquidationism, reinforced the political conservatism of the labor movement. It strengthened the grip of the right-wing AFL and CIO bureaucracies which in 1955 merged on the basis of their procapitalist program.

During the Cochran fight, Cannon had stated that the worst effect of the decline in labor radicalism and the isolation of the party was that the SWP had been deprived of a fresh generation to replenish the ranks of the older leadership. The impact of this "lost generation" on the party was particularly noticeable by the mid-1950s. Lenin had once jested that revolutionaries should be shot once they reach the age of 50! Applying this standard, a large section of the SWP would have qualified for the firing squad in 1954. The veteran leaders of the party, Cannon, Skogland, Dunne, Swabeck, Coover, were already in their sixties and (in the case of Skogland) seventies. Even Dobbs was in his late forties and seemed much older.

However correct the struggle against Cochran in the United States and against Pabloism internationally, it could not provide an automatic guarantee against political degener-

ation in the face of the immense class pressures bearing down upon the movement in the center of world imperialism. Cannon's great difficulty in obtaining majority support on the national committee for a struggle against Cochranism was a political indication that Cochran and Clarke were only the most articulate spokesmen of a political outlook that was shared to some extent by a broader section of leaders in the SWP, despite their endorsement of the "Open Letter."

The clearest indication of the political disorientation of the SWP was its reaction to the growth of McCarthyism in 1953-54. It concluded that the witch-hunting Republican senator from Wisconsin was the leader of an emerging mass fascist movement that was preparing for the seizure of power in the United States. This was an entirely impressionistic and incorrect assessment that expressed the demoralization and pessimism that gripped the SWP leadership.

In March-April 1954, Cannon wrote a series of articles that introduced a conception of fascism entirely different from that which Trotsky had developed in the 1920s and 1930s. In both his writings on Pilsudski in Poland and especially on Nazism in Germany, Trotsky had stressed that fascism differs from other forms of bourgeois reaction in that it is based on the mass mobilization of the petty-bourgeoisie, ruined by capitalism, against the workers' movement and has as its goal the complete atomization of the working class. Under conditions of social crisis so great that the bourgeoisie has exhausted all its options within the framework of constitutional democracy, when not even the most far-ranging concessions of the labor bureaucracy can satisfy the objective requirements of capitalism, when nothing less than the complete smashing of all organized forms of working class resistance to capitalist rule is required, the bourgeoisie calls into existence a mass fascist movement. As Trotsky explained:

Fascism is not merely a system of reprisals, of brutal force, and of police terror. Fascism is a particular governmental system based on the uprooting of all elements of proletarian democracy within bourgeois society. The task of Fascism lies not only in destroying the Communist advance guard but in holding the entire class in a state of

forced disunity. To this end the physical annihilation of the most revolutionary section of the workers does not suffice. It is also necessary to smash all independent and voluntary organizations, to demolish all the defensive bulwarks of the proletariat, and to uproot whatever has been achieved during three-quarters of a century by Social Democracy and the trade unions. For, in the last analysis, the Communist Party also bases itself on these achievements.<sup>1</sup>

Always stressing the mass petty-bourgeois character of such a movement, Trotsky drew a distinction between fascism and even the most brutal military-police dictatorships. Moreover, Trotsky insisted that fascism cannot come to power until the working class, as a result of the betrayals of its leadership, has demonstrated its incapacity to resolve the social crisis on a revolutionary basis, thus driving the desperate petty bourgeoisie into the arms of the counterrevolution.

Again we quote Trotsky:

At the moment when the "normal" police and military resources of the bourgeois dictatorship, together with their parliamentary screens, no longer suffice to hold society in a state of equilibrium — the turn of the Fascist regime arrives. Through the Fascist agency, capitalism sets in motion the masses of the crazed petty bourgeoisie, and bands of the declassed and demoralized lumpen proletariat; all the countless human beings whom finance capital itself has brought to desperation and frenzy. From Fascism the bourgeoisie demands a thorough job; once it has resorted to methods of civil war, it insists on having peace for a period of years.... When a state turns Fascist, it doesn't only mean that the forms and methods of government are changed in accordance with the patterns set by Mussolini — the changes in this sphere ultimately play a minor role — but it means, first and above all, that the workers' organizations are annihilated; that the proletariat is reduced to an amorphous state; and that a system of administration is created which penetrates deeply into the masses and which serves to frustrate the independent crystallization of the proletariat. Therein precisely is the essence of Fascism.<sup>2</sup>

The conditions which existed in the United States in 1953-54 bore absolutely no resemblance to those which prevailed either in Germany in 1930-33 or, for that matter,

in Italy in 1920-22. The absence of an economic crisis in any way comparable to the Depression precluded the mass mobilization of the American middle class in a genuine fascist movement. Both Hitler and Mussolini led mass movements which controlled their own shock troops whose very existence testified to the impotence of the crumbling semiconstitutional regimes and the approach of civil war. Regardless of McCarthy's personal characteristics, private ambitions and individual popularity, he was not the leader of a mass movement such as that which was represented by Hitler's party, with its three million-strong private army. While McCarthy and McCarthyism exhibited tendencies that could be part of the political physiognomy of an American fascist movement, the social conditions through which such demagogues are transformed into fascist leaders did not exist in 1953-54. The absence of such objective preconditions for the development of a mass fascist movement was indicated, moreover, in the fact that McCarthy, aside from his anticommunist ravings, did not offer a social program for the middle class upon which a mass movement could be based. In this, he was not only different from Hitler — who claimed to be the leader of an "anticapitalist," "people's," "national" revolution — but from such potential leaders of incipient American fascist movements such as Huey Long and Father Coughlin.

The SWP attributed to the Wisconsin senator powers that he did not have. While American fascism will have its own peculiar traits, very different from those of the German and Italian models, it must have in common with its European forebears a mass base in the middle class.

But this is precisely what it lacked. McCarthyism was a witch-hunting excrescence which was vomited up by the American ruling class in response to the extreme crisis of American imperialism in the postwar period. Seeking to stifle domestic opposition to the militaristic policies of anti-Soviet containment, the perennial witch-hunts of the 1947-54 period functioned as an auxiliary tool of US foreign policy. Above all, under conditions in which the bourgeoisie could not move directly against the mass trade union organizations built by the working class during the previous two decades, McCar-

thyism served to bolster the position of the anticommunist AFL and CIO bureaucracies and thus maintain the political subordination of the labor movement to capitalism.

Thus, for all the virulence of McCarthy's wild red-baiting, he generally steered clear of the labor movement and did not attempt to transform his witch-hunt into an open attack on the essential conquests of the CIO. This was not simply because large sections of the AFL and CIO leaderships supported his witch-hunt and sought to stoke the flames of anticommunism to drive socialists and radicals out of the labor movement. Any attempt to convert McCarthyism into an instrument of violent attacks upon the trade union movement would have signified a direct turn by the American ruling class toward civil war and would have sparked the very radicalization of the labor movement that the bourgeoisie sought to avoid. As the response of San Francisco longshoremen to the organization of local anticommunist hearings in that city demonstrated, the bosses were playing with fire when they attempted to utilize the crazed McCarthyite atmosphere of political witch-hunting for the purpose of union-busting.

Like all demagogues, McCarthy at times went further than his big-business paymasters intended. But in mid-1954, when he threw caution to the wind and began to attack the army, the bourgeoisie moved decisively to clip his wings. The army-McCarthy hearings marked the end of the Wisconsin senator as a serious political force.

Nevertheless, the Socialist Workers Party persisted in wildly exaggerating the strength of the McCarthy movement. Its draft resolution for the sixteenth national convention in the autumn of 1954 was devoted entirely to McCarthyism. Its very first paragraph showed the extent to which the unfavorable conditions had politically unhinged the SWP:

Since the defeat of McArthur's armies at the Yalu river, *the most important development in world politics has been the rise in the United States of the fascist movement headed by McCarthy.* If this movement succeeds in taking power and smashing the American labor movement, it will signify the eclipse of civilization, for the outbreak of World War III — an inter-continental war waged with atomic weapons —

would not then be long delayed. In such a war even humanity itself might suffer annihilation. If on the other hand the working class mobilizes to put a halt to McCarthyism, the momentum of their effort would place on the order of the day the victory of a Workers and Farmers Government in America. That would signify the end of McCarthyism and along with it international capitalism and all its horrors. It would mean the opening of the planned economy of socialism on a world-wide scale. The struggle against McCarthyism thus is of decisive significance for the entire world.<sup>3</sup> (Emphasis added.)

Disregarding the outcome of the army-McCarthy hearings, which was soon followed by his formal censure in the Senate, the SWP insisted that McCarthyism "will not be subdued or contained by the old capitalist parties.... "

All attempts of the Democrats and Republicans to curb, crush, outflank or brush aside McCarthy have ended in fiasco. The Army-McCarthy hearings, for instance, which resulted from the need of the Eisenhower administration to draw a line on the encroachments of McCarthy's independent power, cost nothing more to the fascist demagogue than the sacrifice of his Jewish Democratic attorney as a scapegoat.

On the other hand, the hearings counted as combat experience for McCarthy's mass following. All evidence shows that the basic core became hardened and drew more closely around the banner of the fascist demagogue. It is true that some marginal supporters were repelled by the crudity of McCarthy's conduct. But the idea that this constituted a major setback for the fascist movement is nothing short of insane. The rise of Hitler likewise had its passionate division of the middle class for and against, with innumerable shifts and upsets. As a matter of fact, the very posing in the hearings of the question "for or against McCarthy?" constituted a major advance for American fascism. Moreover, the hearings brought into focus for millions the indispensable personal symbolism of the leader in the national political arena. There it will stay until the working class settles the issue definitively.

The struggle that broke into the open at the Army-McCarthy hearings showed most clearly that McCarthy's movement is not just another political clique that can be disposed of by the capitalist machine politicians once it

transcends the limits of what is permissible in the code of bourgeois democratic politics. It is a new type of machine with independent power resting on a mass base of its own.<sup>4</sup>

This "mass base" was an invention of the SWP. It did not exist and could not exist for reasons which were actually alluded to by the SWP in the resolution:

The fact is that a big section of the population is still riding the unprecedented economic boom that began with the entrance of America into World War II.

This is particularly true of the wide petty-bourgeois level, including layers of the working class, that has been enjoying a hitherto unknown standard of living. Millions of families that were on relief rolls in the depression, now own farms, homes, automobiles, TV sets, etc.<sup>5</sup>

Trying to bridge the gap between the relative prosperity of the middle class and the ruination which is a prerequisite for a mass fascist movement, the SWP resorted to a wildly idealist theory: "The fear of another economic catastrophe like that of 1929-39 has already proved sufficient to convert them [the middle class] into a vast recruiting ground for fascism."<sup>6</sup>

Behind these heavy-handed constructions was an outlook which combined desperation and frustration. Not knowing how to reach the working class, the SWP leaders hoped to frighten it into action with the specter of imminent fascism. But in the process, they merely frightened themselves and paved the way for further and even more serious departures from Marxism. For example, in order to justify the portrayal of McCarthy as the leader of a mass fascist movement challenging the traditional bourgeois-democratic politicians, the SWP wound up distorting the actual character of the Eisenhower administration, as well as its relation to the McCarthyites: "The cleavage between what has been most recently called "Brownellism," after Eisenhower's attorney general, and McCarthyism, is a cleavage between the Bonapartist and fascist tendencies that have appeared on the American political scene."<sup>7</sup>

While still proclaiming its opposition to any form of political adaptation to the traditional bourgeois parties in the name of the struggle against McCarthyism, the SWP was treading



on thin ice with its effort to draw such sharp distinctions between the different factions within the bourgeoisie: "To think that Brownellism is a graver menace than McCarthyism is to grossly underestimate what would happen in America with McCarthy in the White House."<sup>8</sup>

There is an unseen logic at work within every political line. Implicit in the exaggerated and artificial distinctions being drawn by the SWP between different factions within the bourgeoisie, between "Brownellian Bonapartism" and "McCarthyite fascism," was a drift toward a perspective which placed central emphasis on the defense of democracy, rather than the struggle for socialism and the proletarian dictatorship. The section of the resolution on "The Struggle for Workers Power" suggested precisely such a shift:

The struggle against McCarthyism must be conceived as a nation-wide struggle in which the working class represents the interests of the people and of the country as a whole. At the end of their historic road, the capitalist class revive the most bestial forms of government. The traditional banner bearers of democratic slogans, the liberals, after perspiring over the inroads on democratic rights, deploring the trend and offering endless warnings about how McCarthyism hurts American prestige abroad, end up by jumping on the witch-hunt wagon themselves and trying to seize the driver's reins....

Such traditional slogans as freedom of thought, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, the right to a place on the ballot, equal rights before the law and in the courts, *thus become central slogans in the struggle against the American form of fascism.*<sup>9</sup> (Emphasis added.)

Proceeding from an incorrect assessment of McCarthyism, the SWP arrived at a position in which it tended to place central emphasis on democratic slogans rather than transitional demands. In other words, a danger implicit in its false analysis of McCarthy was that it would lead to a redefinition of the SWP's role: from that of leader of the workers' socialist revolution to that of the most resolute defender of bourgeois democracy. This danger was heightened by the fact that the SWP saw McCarthy as the leader of a powerful fascist movement under conditions in which it openly admitted that

there existed no countervailing mass revolutionary movement of the working class.

A clearly opportunist defense of the SWP's assessment of McCarthyism which, indeed, paved the way for a capitulation to liberalism, was made by Joseph Hansen. Taking time out from his bizarre and disruptive polemics, written under the name of Jack Bustelo, on the question of cosmetics and female beauty ("It is perfectly evident that Gloria Swanson's approach on this point parallels that of a Marxist...."), Hansen undertook to answer the criticisms of the Vern-Ryan tendency, which rejected the definition of McCarthy as a fascist leader. What was most significant in Hansen's reply was his suggestion that between liberalism and fascism there existed an irreconcilable opposition. Objecting to the Vern-Ryan reference to a number of liberal senators as "potential fascists," Hansen placed great emphasis on the conflict between the Senate liberals and McCarthy, and asked:

In this contest between the liberals and the fascists should the working class abstain with a curse on both their houses? Should we follow the method of Vern and Ryan and refuse to separate McCarthy "in any way from all the other supporters of capitalism" and call him, as they do, nothing but another "bourgeois democrat"? To do so would be to follow the politics of abstention and actually facilitate McCarthy's work.

The correct course is based on the major differentiation between the liberals and fascists. We defend the democratic forms against the fascist threat. We do so by attacking the liberals for capitulating to the fascists, for performing their own historic function of paving the way for the fascists, for betraying the people to McCarthyism. From the concessions the liberals make to the fascists — concessions of deep injury to the labor movement — we demonstrate the necessity of removing the liberals from power.<sup>10</sup>

Aside from the incorrect appraisal of McCarthyism, the reference to "the major differentiation between the liberals and fascists" is a distortion of Marxism. Hansen treated liberalism as if it were somehow analogous to the social democratic organizations of the working class. As direct representatives of the bourgeoisie, the liberals cannot be accused of "betraying the people" to fascism in the same way

that Marxists accused the social democrats, Stalinists and trade union bureaucrats of betraying the working class. The antagonism between fascism and social democracy (regardless of the reactionary views of its representatives) is of an entirely different order than the antagonism between fascism and liberalism. In the case of the former, there is, in their social bases, an irreconcilable class antagonism that is not present in the dispute between fascism and liberalism. For the workers, fascism means mass starvation, their reduction to a state of atomized peonage, the obliteration of their existence as an organized social force. For the liberals, as Felix Morrow once wrote, fascism simply threatens "minor inconveniences" that do not threaten a single vital interest of the class they represent.

When liberals like Hubert Humphrey called for the outlawing of the Communist Party and helped generate the anticommunist hysteria in which McCarthyism could flourish, they were not "betraying the people" any more than today's liberals who cut social programs and support union-busting. Rather, they are serving the class of capitalists whom they represent.

Thus, when Hansen accused the liberals of "betraying the people to McCarthyism," he was speaking the language of Stalinism and class collaborationism, not Marxism, and was abandoning the revolutionary standpoint of the proletariat. Moreover, he was implicitly suggesting that their betrayal could be halted if only these bourgeois-democratic custodians of the capitalist state would come to their senses and take decisive action against McCarthy. But this is the very position of relying upon the state to fight fascism which Trotsky emphatically denounced in his withering critique of the policy of German Social Democracy during Hitler's rise to power: "Faced with the impending clash between the proletariat and the Fascist petty bourgeoisie — two camps which together comprise the crushing majority of the German nation — these Marxists from the *Vorwärts* yelp for the night watchman to come to their aid, 'Help! State, exert pressure!' (*Staat, greif zu!*)"<sup>11</sup>

On the basis of Hansen's position, Marxists should have

welcomed the Senate censure of McCarthy as a positive step which deserved at least critical support.

Even if this conclusion was not explicitly drawn, the assessment of McCarthyism — derived initially from extreme pessimism and discouragement in the face of the political quiescence of the American working class — became the opening for opportunism in relation to the capitalist state and the defense of bourgeois democracy. Although the SWP changed its line on McCarthyism at the sixteenth national convention in December 1954, only a perfunctory explanation of the correction was made by Morris Stein when the delegates assembled. The underlying problems in the political perspective of the SWP and its opportunist drift on the question of bourgeois democracy was not examined. Thus, the stage was set for far more serious political errors in the future.

Before continuing, let us return for a moment to Banda. He makes reference to Cannon's incorrect assessment of McCarthyism in his usual bombastic style ("a diagnosis which revealed that he knew little about Fascism and even less about class relations in the US.") But Banda makes no analysis of the political content and theoretical nature of that error and its real relation to the process of the SWP's degeneration. Instead, his "method" of work is so shoddy and devoid of conscientious research that he refers to the McCarthy episode entirely out of its proper historical sequence — after Banda's attack on the 1948 Second World Congress! Even more serious, Banda claims that once the SWP had identified McCarthyism as fascism, "no one ever again heard about the 1946 Theses or for that matter about Trotsky's insistence that the SWP fight for the creation of a Labor Party based on the unions."

This mocking allusion to the SWP's abandonment of the 1946 Theses makes clear that Banda is utterly confused on the question of chronology; he does not seem to realize that the McCarthy question belonged to an entirely different decade in the history of the SWP. In revolutionary politics, eight years is a very long time. Even if the SWP had dropped the 1946 Theses as the basis of its day-to-day agitation, that would have been no crime. After all, a few new things had

happened between 1946 and 1954 — such as the postwar restabilization of capitalism. Banda's confusion on dates is not an unimportant matter; it expresses his lack of an overall historical perspective and his inability to grasp the inner relations between events.

As for his reference to the supposed abandonment of the Labor Party tactic, we must once again inform our readers that Michael Banda does not know what he is talking about. However incorrect the assessment of McCarthy, the SWP still sought to link its agitation against the demagogue to the party's long-term campaign for the establishment of a Labor Party. Indeed, Cannon devoted the final two installments of his series on McCarthy to this very question. In the *Militant* of April 19, 1954, in an article entitled "Fascism and the Labor Party," Cannon wrote:

I believe it is correct to say that a real first step toward a serious struggle against American fascism could hardly be anything less than the formation of a labor party. As long as the trade unions are allied to the Democratic Party and thereby, in effect, dependent on capitalist politicians to protect them against the onslaughts of a fascist party dedicated to a capitalist counter-revolution — they have not even begun to fight....

For that reason, it is perfectly correct to put the slogan of a labor party in the center of our agitation and to concentrate all agitation around it.<sup>12</sup>

In the *Militant* of April 26, 1954, Cannon amplified his thoughts on this question in an article entitled "Implications of the Labor Party." It began:

The formal launching of an Independent Labor Party, the indicated next step in the preliminary mobilization of the American working class against a rising fascist movement, will hit this country like a bomb exploding in all directions. It will not only blow up the traditional two-party system in this country and bring about a basic realignment in the general field of American politics. It will also mark the beginning of a great shake-up in the labor movement itself. The second result will be no less important than the first, and it should be counted on....

To imagine that the present official leaders can make the great shift from the Democratic Party to independent labor

politics, and maintain their leadership smoothly in an entirely new and different situation, requires one to overlook the basic causes which will force them to make this shift. That is, the radicalization of the rank and file and their revolt against the old policy. No matter how it is formally brought about, a labor party will be the product of a radical upsurge in the ranks of the trade unionists. The more the officialdom resists the great change, the stronger will grow the sentiment for a different leadership. Even if the present leaders sponsor the labor party at the start, they will be under strong criticism for their tardiness. The real movement for a labor party, which will come from below, will begin to throw up an alternative leadership in the course of its development....

It is not permissible for revolutionists to pass themselves off as mere advocates of a labor party, pure and simple, like any labor faker who devotes Sunday sermons to this idea. A labor party headed by the present official labor skates, without a program of class struggle, would be a sitting duck for American fascism. That's the truth of the matter, and advocacy of a labor party isn't worth much if it leaves this truth unsaid.<sup>13</sup>

It could be said that Cannon's exposition of the Labor Party question was inevitably marred by the incorrect appraisal of McCarthyism, and that he did not sufficiently elaborate the relation between the struggle for Marxism in the working class, i.e., the building of the revolutionary party, and the fight for the labor party. Nevertheless, these articles give the lie to Banda's claim that the SWP had dropped the demand for a labor party. Banda only makes this claim to support his contention that the issuing of the "Open Letter" was part of Cannon's plan to sell out to the trade union bureaucracy and the Democratic Party — an assertion which reveals that Banda knows nothing about Trotskyist principles and even less about historical truth!

# 21

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## The SWP in Retreat

The SWP's incorrect assessment of McCarthy in 1954 was a symptom of a deep-rooted political crisis which assumed a more dangerous form the following year. The reaction of the SWP to the upsurge of the oppressed black workers and farmers against Jim Crowism in the South amounted to a rejection of Marxist principles in relation to the struggle against the capitalist state. Its repeated calls from October 1955 on for the use of federal troops to "enforce" the US Constitution and "protect" the black population in the South marked a qualitative development in the political degeneration of the SWP.

However, Banda ignores this crucial episode precisely because it sheds light on the inner connection between the political degeneration of the SWP — expressed in its opportunist adaptation to the black petty bourgeoisie and capitulation to bourgeois democracy and the capitalist state — and its turn toward reunification with the Pabloites.

The SWP's call for the use of federal troops in the South was made following the brutal murder of 14-year-old Emmett Till and the acquittal of his killers by a lily-white jury. In a front-page editorial which appeared in the October 17, 1955 *Militant*, the SWP declared, "Labor must fight with all its organized might to force the federal government to intervene in Mississippi and enforce 100% the constitutional rights of the Negro people there."

The same issue carried excerpts from a speech given by George Breitman in Detroit October 7 at a public SWP Friday night forum. Breitman's speech marked the public unveiling

of a new class line for the SWP: a clear shift away from the program of revolutionary class struggle to that of social reform. An entirely new conception of the tasks of the SWP and its historic perspectives were advanced.

What then should be done? What should we be fighting for today? I can tell you in two words: Federal intervention. Federal intervention, with troops if necessary. That's what should be demanded and done. The federal government should step into Mississippi and put a stop to the reign of terror, punish the lynchers and protect the rights of the Negro people.

That's what the Negro people of Mississippi — and of Michigan too — are waiting to hear and to see, a demand that the government of the United States quit hiding behind legal technicalities. It must quit dodging its responsibilities and step in with all the power at its command to uphold and protect the civil rights of the Negro people. Mississippi and its courts have already proved to the whole world they have no intention of recognizing or protecting these rights. That's what has to be done in this situation — and nothing less will do the job.

This position was theoretically and politically indefensible. To suggest that the defense of the black people in the South should be in any way entrusted to the bourgeoisie of the most reactionary imperialist country in the world was a shameful betrayal of the working class and the entire programmatic heritage of the Fourth International.

Fifteen years earlier, the SWP had refused to support the US government in World War II on the grounds that there existed no fundamental class antagonism between American democracy and German fascism, and therefore the Trotskyists did not believe in the capacity of American imperialism to wage a war against Nazism. They saw nothing progressive in the struggle of Roosevelt against Hitler, and insisted that the precondition for a genuine struggle against German imperialism was the overthrow of capitalism in the United States.

Moreover, during the war, when confronted with the eruption of anti-black rioting by racist mobs in Detroit, the SWP emphatically rejected any appeal to the Roosevelt administration: "What must be done to stop this lynch



violence? Certainly no trust or reliance can be placed in the federal authorities, the army, state or municipal police, the good-will of the capitalist rulers, the action of Congress or the President. They have shown that they will not take the steps needed to protect Negro lives and rights."<sup>1</sup>

But 12 years later, the SWP was advocating a policy which was not directed at the independent political mobilization of the working class against the capitalist state, but rather at pressuring the capitalist state to bring a section of the bourgeoisie and its most vicious racist hirelings to heel. The SWP did not raise the demand for the formation of defense guards among the black population to fight back against the racist thugs functioning under the protection of the state government. Nor did it call upon the labor movement in the North to initiate a political general strike against segregation and to organize armed fighting detachments to assist in the defense of the black population.

This policy was an unprincipled adaptation to the petty-bourgeois leadership of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, which was also demanding federal intervention. Insofar as the SWP indicated differences with the NAACP, it was only to chastise the reformists for not being sufficiently vigorous in their call for federal action and for failing to specify the need for the use of troops. In a section of the same October 7 speech which was reported in a later issue of the *Militant*, Breitman declared:

We say federal intervention with troops will be necessary, just as they were needed in the days of Reconstruction. The NAACP leaves its demand vague and unspecified. The advantage of what we propose is that it is clear, it is plain, it is unmistakable, and therefore it has the ability to arouse and encourage and inspire a fighting mass movement; and the disadvantage of the NAACP proposal is that it is vague, it is ambiguous, it is subject to different interpretations and therefore runs the risk of not making a real impact on the thinking of the millions of people in this country who have been asking what they can do about the Till case....

The trouble with the NAACP, obviously, is that it is not asking enough. It is asking the government to intervene on the basis of the so-called federal civil rights laws, which the government practically never invokes or enforces. That

plays into the hands of the ones who are giving us a runaround. Instead of confining the demand to these civil rights laws, which are so limited that the most anyone punished by them could get is a year in prison anyhow, the NAACP should sweep aside the legal technicalities and go to the heart of the matter, intervention with U.S. troops. The raising of this demand will produce a tide of enthusiasm and militancy among the American people, inspire them and give them a goal worth fighting for. It could clarify things and bring them to a head. That's why we say the demand for federal intervention should be clarified, expanded and concretized.<sup>2</sup>

The SWP opposed the petty-bourgeois leaders of the NAACP not as revolutionary proletarian class fighters for socialism, but as more consistent and radical petty-bourgeois democrats. Implicit in this approach was a programmatic redefinition of the political tasks of the SWP. The central emphasis of the party's work was directed toward the defense and extension of democratic rights within the framework of the capitalist state, rather than toward the overthrow of that state and the establishment of the proletarian dictatorship. The program of Breitman proceeded from the middle-class opportunist attitude of implicitly accepting the premises of bourgeois rule and looking for "practical" solutions to the immediate problem within that given framework, not from principled considerations related to the development of the revolutionary consciousness of the working class. Such an approach invariably amounts to an abandonment of the strategic revolutionary line.

Moreover, the references to the Reconstruction period — the most radical phase of the American bourgeois democratic revolution of the mid-nineteenth century — was an indication of the depth of the change taking place in the whole perspective of the SWP. Disoriented by the reactionary political climate within the United States, the SWP began toying with the idea that the Civil War and the Reconstruction period had not completed the bourgeois democratic revolution in the United States. This interpretation conceded to the bourgeois state residual progressive tendencies. It implicitly tended to sanction alliances with sections of the bourgeoisie and justified the granting of political support to

the capitalist state insofar as its actions were directed toward the completion of supposedly unresolved democratic tasks.

The SWP leadership defended its call for the use of federal troops with the claim that this demand would "expose" the government by showing that it refused to enforce its own laws. Furthermore, the SWP leaders argued, this demand would provide an easy way to expose the Democratic Party: candidates for elective office, such as Adlai Stevenson, would shrink from endorsing the demand because they feared the loss of Southern support.

The advocacy of the federal troops slogan sparked internal division within the SWP. Among those who correctly argued against the slogan was Sam Marcy, then the leader of the party's branch in Buffalo. Objecting to Breitman's speech and the theory that the demand for troops "exposes" the government, Marcy wrote in a letter to the national committee January 21, 1956:

In Marxism, the word "expose" means to show or demonstrate the *class essence* of a given phenomenon. Asking for federal (capitalist) troops to Mississippi does not *expose*, but on the contrary, *conceals* the class essence of the terrorist apparatus of the bourgeoisie, its capitalist army. Rather than illuminate its class essence, it obscures the real significance and meaning of the capitalist class *against* the working class and oppressed minorities. The slogan's effect is to stifle the creative initiative of the masses toward *independent* struggle and to increase their reliance on the capitalist state.<sup>3</sup>

In another pointed criticism of the SWP's line, Marcy wrote:

The slogan for *federal troops to Mississippi* is alleged to have originated from the depths of the Negro people. In reality it represents the ideas of the bourgeois and petty bourgeois Negro reformists, who look to the Wall Street government, rather than to the Negro masses and the labor movement for support against the white supremacists' terror. These leaders either overlook, or seek to cover up the *class character* of the capitalist attacks against the Negro people. Instead they foster the illusion that the capitalist government will bring liberation to the South from above. They believe that the Washington government is a supra-class government. Hence it is perfectly logical for them, from

the point of view of their ideology, to ask the government to send its troops to defend the rights of the Negro people.<sup>4</sup>

Marcy also warned, "To counterpose the government of the US to the government of Mississippi — to draw a distinction between the federal army and its various state appendages, is to gloss over their identical class character."<sup>5</sup>

Later, Marcy capitulated to Stalinism and broke with Trotskyism, one of many leaders disoriented by the political crisis inside the Socialist Workers Party. His inability to find his bearings on the central problems of the world socialist revolution, as his position on the Hungarian Revolution revealed, made it impossible for Marcy to develop any consistent and principled struggle against the SWP's growing opportunism. His attempt to maintain a revolutionary proletarian orientation without the struggle for the Fourth International ended in a fiasco, as the present political role of the Marcyites as semi-official advisers of the trade union bureaucracy proves. Nevertheless, Marcy's 1956 criticisms of the SWP on the federal troops issue were correct, and the debate which it sparked within the SWP Political Committee on February 9, 1956 exposed the awful political and theoretical decline of the central leadership.

The arguments employed by Morris Stein amounted to a vulgar apology for class collaboration. Arguing like an unabashed pragmatist, he stated:

We are discussing here not merely whether it is permissible for us to call for federal troops to enforce the Bill of Rights in the South; we are discussing a slogan already widely used by others and we must know what to say about it. This slogan has become the property of the Negro people. The Negro press has been advocating it and Negro leaders have been using this slogan as a test of politicians in the election campaign. This is how Stevenson was smoked out on the question of Negro equality. The federal troop slogan has already become a campaign issue and I dare say that not only the capitalist politicians but our own candidates will be confronted with it as well. In the course of the campaign somebody is bound to ask, "Where do you stand on this question of sending the federal troops to Mississippi to protect Negro lives?"<sup>6</sup>

For a Marxist, such a question would have posed no problem at all. He would first have pointed out that in the very formulation of the question there was a major fallacy: it assumed that federal troops, if they were sent to the South, would be there to "protect Negro lives." Throughout World War II, the SWP continuously answered the question, "Where do you stand on fighting Hitler and defeating fascism" by exposing the reactionary lie that American troops were sent to Europe and Asia to defend democracy. But by 1955, the SWP leadership was no longer prepared to mount a struggle against the illusions of the masses in the role of the federal government and to expose the reactionary essence of bourgeois democracy in the United States. Indeed, its loss of a revolutionary perspective was revealed in its use of such abstract phrases as "Negro people," "Negro press," and "Negro leaders" without defining the real class content of these non-Marxist abstractions.

The SWP was now revising its conceptions on the nature of bourgeois democracy. To justify its appeal to the capitalist state, the SWP developed the theory that two qualitatively different forms of bourgeois rule existed in the North and South:

Marxists have never been neutral on the question of method of bourgeois rule. Since the day of Marx, Marxists have been siding with the *more progressive methods of exploitation and oppression against the more reactionary and more brutal*. We had this argument out in connection with the Spanish Civil War. We had comrades who were against supporting the Loyalists in their struggle against Franco because they were "fundamentally" the same. Fundamentally they were all capitalists. Fundamentally it was the opening of the Second World War and where do pure revolutionists come butting in? We opposed this sharply and we would do it again today because we are interested in defending bourgeois democracy against all the methods of totalitarianism and that is what you have basically in the South insofar as the Negro is concerned. They are under totalitarian rule.<sup>7</sup> (Emphasis added.)

Not only was the analogy poorly constructed and entirely out of place; it was employed by Stein to advance political conceptions hostile to Marxism and which distorted the real

positions held in the past by the Fourth International. In no way could the existence of Jim Crow in the South express the existence of fundamentally antagonistic internal divisions within the American bourgeoisie, justifying the identification of the federal government as the political representative of a more progressive section of the ruling class. Such a line could only serve to justify a policy of class collaboration. Moreover, in his reference to Spain, Stein "forgot" one little thing: during the civil war the Trotskyist "defense" of bourgeois democracy against fascism was based on an unrelenting struggle for the overthrow of the capitalist state. It rejected the bogus claims that there existed fundamental differences between the liberal politician Azana and the fascist Franco, and continually insisted that the defeat of Franco required the smashing of Azana and the popular front. At no time did the Trotskyists suggest that the Azana regime, backed by the social democrats, Stalinists and anarchists, was capable of carrying through any progressive tasks. When Shachtman, in 1937, expressed surprise at Trotsky's opposition to voting in favor of the military budget of the popular front government, Trotsky confessed that Shachtman's criticism "astounded me" and labeled his position petty-bourgeois opportunism.

Underlying Stein's position was the unjustifiable claim that the existence of Jim Crow laws in the South was the expression of historically-unresolved divisions within the capitalist class arising from the failure to complete the democratic revolution:

There is a difference in methods of oppression. This is a difference which has been plaguing American capitalist society. This is one of the contradictions of American life over which the sharpest conflicts have occurred. It is a crying contradiction dogging American imperialism all over the world. The most advanced capitalist country has a residue of an unresolved bourgeois democratic problem — the Jim Crow system. And they haven't been able to resolve it.<sup>8</sup>

This interpretation marked a fundamental revision of the SWP's past conception of the relation between Jim Crow and the development of industrial and finance capitalism in the

United States in the aftermath of the Civil War. Previously, the SWP had continually stressed the organic political and economic connections between the Northern industrialists and financiers and the monstrous institutionalization of racism in the South. It insisted that the oppression of the black population in the South was an essential component element of bourgeois rule in the United States.

Under the influence of Trotsky, the SWP undertook, from the standpoint of developing the strategy of the socialist revolution, a serious study of the problems of the black people. Among the important products of this work was the resolution, "Negro Liberation Through Revolutionary Socialism," which was originally adopted at the SWP National Convention in 1948 and published in a revised form in February 1950. The resolution declared, "Next to the emancipation of the working class from capitalism, the liberation of the Negro people from their degradation is the paramount problem of American society. These two social problems are integrally united. The only road to freedom for the workers, and to equality for the Negroes, is through their common struggle for the abolition of capitalism."<sup>9</sup>

The resolution insisted that "not the slightest concession must be made to any ideas which do not place upon capitalism the complete responsibility, deliberate and conscious, for the existing situation of Negroes, the spread of racial prejudices in all areas of the United States today, and the example and encouragement given by American "democracy" to race-haters and race-baiters all over the world."<sup>10</sup>

The SWP carefully traced the origins of the symbiotic relation between Jim Crowism and capitalist rule:

Before the Civil War and afterwards, to maintain their privileged position, they [the Southern bourbons] have systematically propagated and injected racial discrimination, segregation, super-exploitation and prejudice into this country's life. In this they have been aided and abetted by Northern industrial capitalists. In 1876, after establishing its political domination over the defeated slave-owners, Northern capital cemented a new alliance with Southern propertied interests for the maintenance of white supremacy. Since then Northern capital has steadily extended its

financial control until today the South is entirely in its grip. Thus today it is the interests of capitalism which demand the maintenance and perpetuation of the Southern system.

...

To contend that bourgeois democracy is capable of regenerating and reforming the South for the benefit of the Negro is to whitewash and embellish the present promoters and beneficiaries of Negro persecution. Only the proletarian revolution can free the Negroes, cleanse the social sewer of the South, and reorganize its economy.<sup>11</sup>

To underscore this revolutionary truth, the SWP resolution pointed to the appalling social conditions which confronted blacks living in the North:

Capitalism confines most workers to slum-dwellings and miserable neighborhoods. This is itself a form of segregation, despite attempts to obscure this by fictitious democratic propaganda. This segregation of the proletariat as a whole assumes an exceptionally aggravated form in the case of the Negroes.

The system of plantation slavery dictated rigid social segregation of the slave. Driven by the needs of the Southern system and its own needs, capitalism, while integrating the Negroes into Northern industry, maintained and extended Jim Crow segregation. Everywhere the Negroes have been herded into ghettos.<sup>12</sup>

In defining the "special contribution of the Negro struggle to the proletarian movement in the United States," the SWP resolution stated:

Under the banner of Negro rights, the movement of the Negro people is rendered most sensitive and responsive to social tensions. It acts as a spur in precipitating struggles for elementary democratic rights; it unmasks the class nature of the capitalist state; it helps educate the working class to the reactionary role of bourgeois democracy and the need to wage a merciless struggle against it; and propels into action the major political forces of the nation and the organized labor movement.<sup>13</sup>

Neither the historical analysis nor the programmatic conceptions advanced in the 1948-50 resolution were to be found in the position advanced by the SWP between 1955-57 in relation to the black struggle for civil rights. By the time



of the Little Rock crisis, the reactionary content of the demand for federal troops was exposed when Eisenhower obliged the SWP and dispatched troops to Arkansas. During the decade that followed, the role played by the capitalist state in the repression of the black struggle was shown with brutal clarity again and again. From the FBI-organized assassinations of black leaders and civil rights activists to the landing of the 82nd Airborne Division in Detroit, the capitalist state functioned as the central coordinator of all conspiracies against the democratic rights of the black masses in the United States.

From the standpoint of Marxism, the SWP shares political responsibility for crimes inflicted upon the black population in the North and South by the forces of the federal government because it worked to create illusions in the "progressive" nature of the capitalist state.

Among those who staunchly supported the call for the use of federal troops in the South was Hansen, whose arguments were those of a vulgar petty-bourgeois democrat. Defining the demand for the use of federal troops to enforce civil rights laws as a "revolutionary bourgeois" slogan, he argued that such slogans "can be advanced by us in the present stage only because the bourgeoisie themselves have entered the stage of decay and are no longer able to uphold them. They dissipate their gains and throw them away. They actually revert to a position below what they began with in the struggle against feudalism. It falls on us therefore to defend and to advance these bourgeois slogans."<sup>14</sup>

Hansen latched onto the general truth that the bourgeoisie, in the imperialist epoch, abandons the democratic ideals of its revolutionary past, and twisted it to argue that the Marxist party must therefore become the most ardent champion of bourgeois democracy — to the extent of leading a national campaign to demand that the capitalist state uphold the constitution.

First of all the content is a demand to enforce elementary bourgeois law and safeguard human life in Mississippi. From this viewpoint the slogan is completely justifiable. Next you notice this — the content of the slogan is the feeling among wide sections of the Negro people that the

government in Mississippi cannot be trusted. That is a very progressive development. You can't trust the government in Mississippi to safeguard human life. That is completely revolutionary and I can't see how we can possibly put ourselves in the political position of not trying to foster that sentiment and if possible trying to lead it.<sup>15</sup>

Hansen's ludicrous claim that Mississippi blacks, after 80 years of Ku Klux Klan rule, were only beginning to understand that they "can't trust the government in Mississippi to safeguard human life" was directed toward defending an adaptation to their illusions in the federal government:

The Negro people, of course, have illusions about the federal government. They don't trust the government in Mississippi and want a new government there, but still think that this can be the federal government. We are confronted with the question, should we go through this experience with them or confine ourselves to good advice from afar? Everything in our revolutionary experience indicates we should go with them.<sup>16</sup>

Hansen's formulations were arguments in defense of the worst forms of political opportunism. For the SWP to have rejected appeals to the federal government, to have warned Southern blacks to place no confidence in the imperialist tyrants in Washington and their military satraps, to have called for the formation of black defense guards and the nationwide mobilization of the trade union movement to stop the racist terror in the South, would have been, in Hansen's words, to give "good advice from afar." According to Hansen's method, it would have been permissible for the SWP to support US imperialism in World War II on the grounds that while the American working class opposed Hitler and wanted a different government in Germany, they still thought this could be done through Roosevelt.

In the very issue of the *Fourth International* which published the above-quoted 1948 SWP resolution, there was also an article by George Novack on the lessons of Reconstruction:

Much disillusionment in regard to the current civil rights struggle might have been avoided if the following lesson of Reconstruction had been known and assimilated. If the Northern capitalists feared and failed to give real equality

and enduring freedom to the Negroes during their progressive days in the mid-19th century, how then can the present imperialist autocrats at Washington be expected to grant them in the middle of the 20th century when Big Business not only tyrannizes over the South but has become the foremost foe of the liberties of the entire people at home and on a world scale?<sup>17</sup>

Within just five years, the bowing of the SWP before the pressures of political reaction in the United States caused its leaders to forget what they themselves had written. The position adopted by the SWP in 1955 was not merely an episodic mistake. On a fundamental question central to the whole perspective of proletarian revolution in its own country, the SWP abandoned its previous Marxist program and adopted an opportunist line. This represented a shift in its class orientation: away from the proletariat and toward the petty bourgeoisie.

# 22

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## Khrushchev's Secret Speech to the Twentieth Congress

The political crisis within the Socialist Workers Party had assumed extremely dangerous proportions by 1956. Almost a decade of steadily worsening isolation had taken a tremendous toll on the party's cadre.

But then the international labor movement was shaken by two events which shattered the seemingly impregnable edifice of Stalinism: the "secret speech" delivered by Nikita Khrushchev before the delegates of the Communist Party's Twentieth Congress in February 1956 and the eruption of the political revolution in Hungary eight months later.

No account of the sequence of events leading up to the decision of the SWP to seek reunification with the Pabloites would be coherent, let alone complete, without examining the impact of the Stalinist crisis upon the Trotskyist movement. But Banda all but ignores the events of 1956, making only a fleeting reference to the Hungarian Revolution which is, as usual, both dishonest and cynical: "True to form Cannon, having established his own freedom to manoeuvre with the labor bureaucracy and having disposed of the Cochranite nuisance, was now prepared to do business with Pablo on the basis of a common stand on the Hungarian Revolution and a watering down of the programme of political revolution."

Let us examine the claim that there was a "common stand" taken by Cannon and the Pabloites on the events of 1956. The SWP would later defend its turn to reunification by claiming, without any justification whatsoever, that the Pabloites' reaction to Khrushchev's speech and the Hungarian Revolution indicated a sharp break from their revisionist positions of 1953 and a confluence of the lines of the International Committee and the International Secretariat.

Banda's acceptance of this position is part of his attempt to deny the principled content of the 1953 split and the real depth of the programmatic differences between Trotskyism and Pabloism. The decision of Cannon and the SWP to bury the 1953 split and seek reunification did not arise out of a confluence of political lines between the ICFI and the Pabloites. Rather, the growing adaptation of the SWP to the milieu of petty-bourgeois radicalism within the United States led Cannon to seek reunification, despite the fact that the SWP's line on the Khrushchev speech and Hungarian Revolution was fundamentally different from that of the Pabloites.

The SWP's attitude toward the Pabloites changed at the point where the class logic and practical needs of its adaptation to nonproletarian forces in the United States — which assumed a malignant form with the adoption of the "regroupment" strategy — came into direct conflict with and could not be reconciled with a formally correct international opposition to the revisionists. Let us now examine this process in detail, beginning with the astonishing speech made by Khrushchev in February 1956.

For nearly three decades, Stalin had been depicted as "the Father of the people," "the Lenin of our era," the source of all wisdom and the guarantor of all of nature's bounties. The titles he was accorded in the pages of the Soviet press would have embarrassed an oriental despot.

The deification of Stalin was not confined to the Soviet Union. Among the most dedicated and loud-mouthed priests of the Stalin cult were the leaders of the American Communist Party, including its present-day general secretary, Gus Hall. A few years before 1956, when William Z. Foster, a founder and longtime leader of the CP, wrote his

autobiography, he chose the unfortunate title *From Bryan to Stalin*. But then, three years after the death of "the genial Stalin," Nikita Khrushchev ascended a podium to tell the world that his former boss was a bloodthirsty and murdering tyrant:

Stalin acted not through persuasion, explanation and patient co-operation with people, but by imposing his concepts and demanding absolute submission to his opinion. Whoever opposed this concept or tried to prove his viewpoint, and the correctness of his position, was doomed to removal from the leading collective and to subsequent moral and physical annihilation....

Stalin originated the concept "enemy of the people." This term automatically rendered it unnecessary that the ideological errors of a man or men engaged in a controversy be proven; this term made possible the usage of the most cruel repression, violating all norms of revolutionary legality, against anyone who in any way disagreed with Stalin.... The formula "enemy of the people" was specifically introduced for the purpose of physically annihilating such individuals.

It is a fact that many persons who were later annihilated as enemies of the party and people had worked with Lenin during his life.<sup>1</sup>

Thirty-three years had passed since Leon Trotsky had initiated the struggle against the growth of the Stalinist bureaucracy and its usurpation of political power from the Soviet working class. Twenty years had passed since Stalin had initiated the blood purges which resulted in the physical annihilation of two generations of revolutionary Marxists who had led the October Revolution and built the Soviet state. Sixteen years had passed since a GPU assassin had driven an ice pick through the skull of Leon Trotsky, whose name had been proclaimed anathema by the Kremlin and its satellite Stalinist organizations throughout the world.

But suddenly, in February 1956, the implacable struggle that Trotsky had waged against Stalin and the entire bureaucratic social caste and the Bonapartist system that the dead dictator personified was being vindicated. Who else had told the truth about Stalin and Stalinism? Who else had analyzed the political and social origins of the monstrous

bureaucratic tyranny? Who else had uncovered the inner contradictions embodied in Stalinism, exposed the incompatibility of bureaucratic rule with the objective needs of economic planning on the basis of nationalized industry and demonstrated the inevitability of a *political* revolution against the bureaucracy? The specter of Trotsky and Trotskyism — not only as the great accuser from the past, but above all as the conscious expression of the Soviet proletariat's pent-up hatred of the bureaucracy and its revolutionary program of struggle — haunted the Twentieth Congress.

It took several weeks for the news of Khrushchev's speech to cross the borders of the Soviet Union. Leaders of local Stalinist parties were dumbfounded as they read the text in the capitalist press. At first, they waited for the expected official denial from the Kremlin, a technical reprieve that would allow the Stalinist hacks to go on lying in front of their membership and the working class. When no denial was forthcoming, the Stalinist organizations were thrown into turmoil.

For the Fourth International, the Twentieth Congress was more than a vindication of its past struggles. It was a monumental verification of its program and perspective as well as a devastating refutation of those revisionists who had seen no future for Trotskyism except as an appendage of the supposedly mighty Stalinist organizations.

The Khrushchev revelations underscored the significance of the split that had occurred inside the Fourth International in 1953. The objective role of Pabloism clearly had been to politically disarm the Fourth International at the very point when the crisis of the Soviet bureaucracy was rapidly maturing and creating the conditions for smashing Stalinism in the international workers' movement.

With its impressionistic theories of "generations" of deformed workers' states and self-reforming bureaucracies, Pabloism had served to bolster illusions in the Stalinists and to deflect the struggle against them. Its proposals for organizational liquidation, political capitulation dressed up as a unique form of "entryism," meant, in practice, calling off the struggle against the Stalinists when they were the most vulnerable.

The ramifications of the split, and the depth of the political chasm separating Trotskyism from Pabloism, were revealed in the very different reactions of the International Committee and the International Secretariat to the Khrushchev revelations.

When James P. Cannon stood before an audience in Los Angeles on the evening of March 9, 1956 to deliver a speech entitled "The End of the Stalin Cult," Cannon had every right to invoke the memory of all those countless revolutionists who had fallen in the struggle against the Soviet bureaucracy. Twenty-eight years earlier, he himself had begun the struggle for Trotsky's views and had been expelled from the Communist Party. Now, one month past his sixty-sixth birthday, he explained the meaning of Khrushchev's speech:

Three years ago Stalin, the bloodthirsty tyrant, the betrayer of revolutions and the murderer of revolutionists, "the most sinister criminal in the history of mankind," unfortunately died in bed. Two weeks ago his personally selected and hand-picked heirs, the beneficiaries of his monstrous tyranny and the accomplices of all his crimes, used the occasion of the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party to denounce the cult of Stalin and to declare that his dictatorial rule for twenty years was wrong.

The congress pronouncement is true, as far as it goes. And it is the first official truth that has come out of Moscow for more than thirty years. Truth is a slow starter. Mark Twain said a lie can travel halfway around the world while the truth is putting its shoes on. But the truth has more endurance than the lie, and eventually catches up with it. The truth is on the march again — even in Moscow....

One of the Moscow correspondents of the Associated Press reports that he asked a congress delegate what would now be done about all those plaster monuments of Stalin standing around in Moscow and all over Russia, and the delegate answered: "The monuments can stand." But he's mistaken about that. They will stand for a while until somebody gets the idea for a badly needed road program in the Soviet Union, and looks at all this plaster standing around for no good reason, and says it ought to be put through the rock crusher and ground up into material for concrete. That's where the monuments of Stalin will eventually end....



Whatever the reason for this action of the Soviet congress, the repudiation of Stalin by his heirs is big news and good news — the biggest news and the best news since the death of Stalin himself three years ago. We can recognize this without exaggerating the significance of the congress action or deceiving ourselves and others about its purpose.

It does not mean the end of Stalinism in the Soviet Union and on the international field. Far from it. The assembled bureaucrats at the Congress, who are the product of the abominable system and the representatives of its privileged beneficiaries, hope to preserve Stalinism by unloading Stalin and repudiating the hateful cult associated with his name. But the repudiation of the cult may very well mark the beginning of the end of the system just the same.<sup>2</sup>

Cannon rejected the view that Khrushchev's speech represented a movement toward self-reform that in any way invalidated the Trotskyist program for the violent overthrow of the Soviet bureaucracy. He pointed out that Khrushchev defended the political foundations of Stalinism and refused to condemn the "counterrevolution against the heritage of Lenin, which was defended by Trotsky."

They swear off the cult of Stalin without specifying and repudiating the specific crimes that were committed in the name of that cult; without repudiating the whole theory and practice of Stalinism on a national and international scale since the death of Lenin. They haven't yet said anything about the long, monstrous record of Stalinism in the international labor movement.

That record includes the betrayal of the Chinese revolution in 1926; and the betrayal of the German workers in 1933, which made possible the victory of Hitler and all its terrible consequences for the German working class and for the people of Europe. They haven't said anything yet about the betrayal of the Spanish revolution in 1936, and the murder of the Spanish revolutionists by the Stalinist gunmen sent there for that purpose. They haven't mentioned yet the Stalin-Hitler pact, which precipitated the Second World War.

They haven't mentioned the policy of social patriotism adopted by all the Stalinist parties allied with the Soviet Union during the Second World War. Under this policy the shameful Stalinists in this country joined the camp of the imperialist masters and became the chief advocates of the

no-strike pledge and the most zealous strike-breakers. In the service of Stalin they applauded our prosecution in Minneapolis in 1941 — the first prosecution under the Smith Act — and appealed to the unions to refuse contributions to our legal defense.

The Moscow congress didn't say anything about the betrayal of the revolution in Europe immediately after the war. The French partisans and the Italian partisans had power in their hands, but they were disarmed by the policy of Stalinism. The communist workers were demoralized by the Stalinist policy of collaboration with the bourgeoisie. Representatives of the Communist parties in Italy and France went into bourgeois cabinets and helped to stabilize the regime and stifle the revolution.

They haven't yet repudiated another typical manifestation of Stalinism here in the United States. That is the present policy of the Communist Party, advising the workers to be good Democrats and join the Democratic Party along with the bankers and the industrialists and the Dixiecrats, and vote for the Democratic Party in order to serve the diplomatic interests of the Kremlin gang.

They have repudiated the cult of Stalin, but they haven't yet repudiated Stalinism and the crimes of Stalinism. That is something like a professional criminal pleading guilty to spitting on the sidewalk in the hope of avoiding trial on the charge of murder.

The Moscow bureaucrats have made a start — that cannot be denied, or ignored. They have confessed something, but they haven't confessed enough yet. They said *A*, but they choked over *B*. But in the political alphabet, *B* follows after *A*, and we can be confident that it will be said in due time. If the heirs of Stalin cannot yet say *B*, because to do so they would have to repudiate themselves, the Soviet workers, whose burning hatred of every memory of the Stalinist regime is the driving force behind these first partial disavowals will say it for them — and against them.

The repudiation of the Stalin cult at the Moscow congress is an echo in the top bureaucratic circles of the ominous rumble of the coming political revolution in the Soviet Union. Nothing less than a complete political revolution will do there. It is not merely the cult of Stalin as a person, but Stalinism as a political system, that must be repudiated and overthrown. That can be done only by a revolution of the Soviet workers.

The goal of this revolution is the unconditional repudiation of the Stalinist theory of "socialism in one country," which was the motivation of all the crimes and betrayals, and the reaffirmation of the Lenin-Trotsky program of proletarian internationalism; the overthrow of the Stalinist police state in the Soviet Union and the restoration of Soviet democracy; the abolition of the privileged caste; a complete review of the frame-up trials and purges and a vindication of their victims. These are the demands and the program of the political revolution in the Soviet Union.

The Moscow congress was not the revolution, and it does not signify the restoration of Soviet democracy, as fools and traitors may suggest, but it was an incident on the road to it. A faltering, hesitant reflection in the Soviet tops of a mighty revolutionary impulse from below; a promise of reform in the police-state regime, a verbal gesture of appeasement in the hope of heading off the storm — that is what the pronouncements of the Moscow congress are really intended to signify. That and nothing more is what is intended.<sup>3</sup>

Already the pressure of alien class forces within the United States was bearing down heavily on the Socialist Workers Party, whose leaders, after nearly a decade of continuous political reaction, economic prosperity and ever-deeper isolation from the mass working class organizations, were increasingly skeptical about the prospects for revolutionary struggle in the United States. But despite this, on that Friday night in March, the old warrior brought his speech to a stirring conclusion:

The perspectives before us are breathtaking. And they are not the perspectives of a dim and distant future, but of the epoch in which we live and struggle now. We should take heart, for we have great allies. The Russian workers, breaking out of the prison of Stalinism and taking the road of international revolutionary action once again; great China and the revolutionary movement of the whole colonial world; and the mighty working class of the United States and Europe — here in these three forces is the invincible "Triple Alliance" which can change the world and rule the world, and make it safe for freedom, peace and socialism.

The end of the Stalin cult, which is a part of the revolutionary development in the world, signifies the

beginning of the vindication of Trotsky. His theory of revolutionary development is finding confirmation in world events in one country after another — and now, once again, in Russia. All that he foresaw and explained to us, his disciples, is being demonstrated in life as true. And we, who have fought long years under his banner, salute his glorious name again today. We are surer than ever that we have been right. We have more reason than ever to fight without compromise for the full program of Trotskyism. And we have more reason than ever for confidence in victory.

Our victory will be more than the victory of a faction or a party — for the factional and party struggle is and has been the expression of the international struggle of classes. The vindication and victory of Trotskyism will coincide with, and fully express, the victory of the international working class in the struggle against the capitalist exploiters and the Stalinist traitors, for the socialist reorganization of the world.<sup>4</sup>

The tone set by Cannon's speech was reproduced in a resolution passed by the SWP National Committee in April 1956, entitled "The New Stage in the Russian Revolution," which was clearly directed against the Stalinist-conciliationism of the Pabloites:

The groups here and there who decided that Trotskyism had been bypassed by history and that the wave of the future belonged to Stalinism are now confounded by each fresh concession calling the world's attention to the fact that Trotskyism was the only force that told the truth about Stalinism. The politics of betrayal narrows down for these groups to vying with the worst Stalinist hacks in providing rationalizations for the bureaucracy, painting up the desperate efforts at rehabilitation in face of the mass pressure as "self-reform" of the bureaucracy. Deutscherism, which leaves out the Soviet masses as if the bureaucracy were a rational autonomous power, turns out to be the ideology best suited to assist the demagoguery of the Khrushchevs.<sup>5</sup>

In a second speech delivered by Cannon on June 15, 1956 dealing with the Khrushchev revelations, he continued to attack the Pabloite perspective, insisting that the concessions made by the Soviet bureaucracy were merely a desperate

attempt to head off the inevitable and unstoppable uprising of the Soviet masses.

The irresistible pressure of the Soviet workers was the power behind the Twentieth Congress. That, comrades, is the key to an understanding of what is taking place. The bureaucrats assembled at that congress had had warning signals of a coming storm, and they began to respond to these signals. The uprising of the East German workers in June 1953, that was followed a month later by a general strike of the Vorkuta slave-labor camp — those tremendous actions under the guns of police-state terror, when workers took their lives in their hands to strike, gave notice of a coming revolutionary storm, just as the general-strike movement of the Russian workers in 1905 gave notice of the first revolution against the Czar....

We put all our faith in this revolutionary movement of the Soviet workers and no faith whatever in the good intentions of the bureaucratic heirs of Stalin. I think the best way to muddle up the discussion of the new events, and the worst crime against the truth in the discussion opening up now, is to say that the Soviet bureaucrats have already reformed themselves or are in the process of doing so, that they have "mellowed" and that all they need is to be left alone to bring about a gradual elimination of all the hated features of Stalinism and the restoration of a democratic workers' regime.

If they are trusted and left alone everything will remain basically the same. These bureaucrats are the privileged upper crust. They will never give up their privileges voluntarily. They have to be overthrown like every other privileged group in history had to be overthrown. Trotsky said on this subject twenty years ago, in his great book, *The Revolution Betrayed*, "No devil ever yet voluntarily cut off his own claws." <sup>6</sup>

The Pabloites' response to the denunciation of Stalin was of an entirely different character. Their preoccupation with conflicts within the bureaucracy — which always served as the springboard for their flights of speculative fancy — were more obsessive than ever in 1956. Whereas Cannon insisted that the crisis of the bureaucracy was the manifestation of the revolutionary movement of the working class; that the concessions expressed the fear of the bureaucracy, which

remained loyal to Stalinism; that the working class would still have to politically destroy and physically remove the representatives of this privileged caste; and that this required the building of a revolutionary, i.e., Trotskyist, leadership, the Pabloites spun elaborate theoretical webs which were centered on the assumed revolutionary potential of one or another section of the Stalinist bureaucracy.

In the *Transitional Program*, Trotsky indicated that the revolutionary movement of the working class would tend to produce divisions within the bureaucracy. Its political polarization would generate everything from neofascist elements ("the faction of Butenko") to those which exhibit revolutionary tendencies ("the faction of Reiss").

But this observation was entirely subordinate to Trotsky's central and overriding emphasis on the irreconcilable opposition of the proletariat to the bureaucracy and his insistence on the counterrevolutionary role of the bureaucracy.

Not only did he note that the "revolutionary elements within the bureaucracy" are "only a small minority" who are only able to reflect the interest of the proletariat "passively." He also warned that the "fascist, counterrevolutionary elements, growing uninterruptedly, express with even greater consistency the interests of world imperialism."<sup>7</sup>

At any rate, the prospects for the emergence or nonemergence of isolated elements in the bureaucracy sympathetic to the proletariat did not function as a significant factor in the formulation of the strategy and program of the Fourth International.

The Pabloites, on the other hand, based their strategy not on the revolutionary proletariat, but on the political reflection of its struggle within the summits of the Soviet bureaucracy. The historic role of the working class, as far as Mandel and Pablo were concerned, was limited to that of a pressure group on what they considered to be the main historical force for the realization of socialism: the bureaucracy. An editorial in the March 1956 of the Pabloite journal *Quatrieme Internationale* summed up the views of the revisionists:

*The bureaucracy is under pressure, in different forms, from a Soviet society liberating itself from the Stalinist yoke. It is beginning to differentiate itself at the top under the*

*influence of these increasing pressures. The future development of this process will be determined by the interaction of this pressure, the direct action of the masses, and the struggle of tendencies within the bureaucracy.*

This evolution is only beginning. It would be an unpardonable error to imagine that this evolution will proceed, as before, in a straight line ending quickly with the restoration of real proletarian democracy in the USSR and a "return to Lenin" in domestic as well as foreign policy. *To arrive at such a result, it will be necessary to reach a stage where the politicization of the masses, going over to direct action, combines with a sharper differentiation, an actual break, between the developing revolutionary wing and the more and more isolated thermidorean wing of the bureaucracy. This process of political revolution will culminate in the overturn of the bureaucratic regime and the re-establishment of Soviet democracy.*<sup>8</sup> (Editorial's emphasis.)

This was not the Trotskyist theory of political revolution, but a theory of bureaucratic self-reform, abetted by the auxiliary pressure of the proletariat. Pablo and Mandel dished up the "direct action of the masses" — a conveniently flexible phrase that could mean almost anything — alongside of "the struggle of tendencies within the bureaucracy." The "direct action of the masses," produces, or rather "combines with" the inner conflict between "the developing revolutionary wing" of the bureaucracy and the "more and more isolated thermidorean wing," resulting in the restoration of Soviet democracy.

The purpose of these tortured formulations, which bear no resemblance to Trotsky's simple and direct explanation of the mechanics of the political revolution, was to focus the attention of the Trotskyist movement not on the task of mobilizing the working class to overthrow the bureaucracy but on *searching for liberal allies within the ranks of the privileged caste.*

The capitulatory nature of the statement was clearly revealed in the following passage: "The Fourth International, while welcoming the results of the Twentieth Congress without sectarianism, has no illusions. It knows that the struggle for the genuine renewal of proletarian democracy

will be a long one. But the Fourth International has shown that it has all the tenacity that is required."<sup>9</sup>

In fact, the whole statement was nothing but an exercise in wishful thinking, an attempt to suggest that the restoration of Soviet democracy was a matter of achieving a proper balance between the actions of an expanding reformist tendency of the bureaucracy and the pressure of the Soviet working class.

The unequalled ability of Ernest Mandel to obscure fundamental social contradictions and develop out of his journalistic impressions the most complicated political schemes for the regeneration of the Soviet bureaucracy found its quintessential expression in a report which he delivered to the seventeenth plenum of the Pablotite International Executive Committee in May 1956.

Like a prospector mining for gold, Mandel scoured the Soviet bureaucracy in search of those liberal tendencies that had been assigned the decisive role in the regeneration of Soviet Union. Sifting through the multitude of tendencies, "left" and "right" within the bureaucracy, from that of "Mikoyan-Malenkov" to that of "Kaganovich-Molotov," Mandel proclaimed:

Clearly the bureaucracy cannot be considered as one "reactionary mass" which the working class will have to attack all at once. This mechanistic and anti-Marxist position is contrary to everything Trotsky taught. The more the pressure of the masses (and, parallel to it, the pressure of the most privileged layers) increases, the more the bureaucracy, including its leaders, will split into conflicting tendencies. In the course of this process a "Reiss tendency" will appear which will sincerely realign itself with the Leninist tradition. The Mikoyan tendency certainly cannot be identified as such a tendency; at most it provides a culture medium for the ideas of such a tendency to develop. It is impossible to predict the exact comportment of every Kremlin leader in the course of this process; but it is excluded that a return to democracy will come about gradually, coldly, without overt action by the masses against the bureaucracy, without splits in the CP and in the bureaucracy itself.



Events have completely confirmed the correctness of the view we defended since 1953 on this subject of the decisive role of pressure of the masses in the internal evolution of the USSR. Some of our so-called orthodox critics tried to explain these events as the result of internal dissensions in the bureaucracy. Today it is clear how untenable this position is, and how it is this position itself which actually favors tendencies to capitulate to Stalinism.<sup>10</sup>

Far from moving away from their revisionist moorings, the Pabloites specifically upheld the positions that had produced the split in 1953, stating openly that their line on the Khrushchev revelations was a continuation of their old perspective. And, in this, they were correct. The divisions between orthodox Trotskyism and Pabloism had grown deeper by 1956. Moreover, the rebellion of the Polish working class in the autumn of that year, followed immediately by the eruption of the Hungarian Revolution, demonstrated that the Pabloite line constituted a betrayal of the working class.

# 23

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## The Impact of the Hungarian Revolution

The net effect of Mandel's idle speculations about the struggle of tendencies within the Soviet bureaucracy was to politically disorient and disarm European workers and all those influenced by the Pabloites on the eve of a new eruption of Stalinist terror against the working class.

The brutal suppression of the Hungarian Revolution in November 1956, at the cost of 20,000 lives, decisively answered those who believed that Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin's crimes signified the beginning of a process of bureaucratic self-reform.

Not only did the bloody intervention of the Soviet Union against the revolution prove again that Stalinism could be destroyed only by the methods of civil war; even more significantly, the struggle of the Hungarian workers was a vindication of the theoretical and political foundations of Trotsky's fight against the bureaucracy. Just as the Paris Commune of 1871 showed the world for the first time, if only in embryonic form, the dictatorship of the proletariat, the Greater Budapest Workers' Council (and associated councils throughout Hungary) revealed the living form of the political revolution.

In the heat of the events of November and December 1956, while the workers of Budapest organized and maintained for more than four weeks their heroic general strike against the Soviet intervention, the Pabloites temporarily adapted their rhetoric to the mass movement. But after the strike, the

Pabloites quickly reverted to their familiar revisionist stance, sowing illusions in the nature of the bureaucracy and doing their best to emasculate the Trotskyist program of political revolution.

The differences between the International Committee and the SWP on the one hand and the Pabloites on the other that were apparent in their responses to Khrushchev's secret speech were no less obvious in their evaluation of the Hungarian Revolution. In January 1957, on the eve of a sudden and decisive change in its international orientation, the Socialist Workers Party's National Committee issued a statement, entitled "The Hungarian Revolution and the Crisis of Stalinism," which based itself on what Cannon still chose to call "orthodox Trotskyism."

Analyzing both the Hungarian Revolution and the mass movement in Poland which had preceded it, the SWP statement began with a slashing attack on the Pabloite perspective: "Once and for all, Stalin's heirs demonstrated the idiocy of any belief in the possibility of their 'self-reform.'" They showed in the harshest way possible the correctness of Trotsky's view that they resemble a ruling class in the tenacity with which they cling to power and the special privileges it assures."<sup>1</sup>

The document examined the development of the Hungarian Revolution and critically analyzed the experience of its most important achievement, the workers councils, placing its central emphasis on the necessity of constructing a Marxist leadership to organize and lead the successful political revolution. The workers councils, lacking Trotskyist leadership, could not provide the answers to the political and practical tasks that were raised by the struggle.

The absence of a revolutionary-socialist party was costly to the Hungarian workers. This is not to say that they can be held responsible for its absence. As experience has shown, it is not easy to build such a party under the totalitarian rule of Stalinism. Lacking conscious revolutionary-socialist leadership, the Workers Councils failed to assert their power. They continued to negotiate for concessions from Moscow's puppets. This proved disastrous. While the leadership of the Workers Councils wasted time in futile

negotiations with figures who had no real power within the country, the Stalinist counterrevolution mobilized its repressive forces.

(a) The leadership of the Workers Councils failed to proclaim clearly the aims of the revolution: national freedom and workers' democracy; the overthrow of the bureaucratic caste and the vesting of power in the Workers Councils.

(b) The leadership of the Workers Councils failed to systematically issue revolutionary appeals to the workers of all Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, explaining the aims of the revolution and asking for socialist solidarity in the common struggle.

(c) The leadership of the Workers Councils failed to systematically appeal to the Soviet forces, reminding them of their heritage in the 1917 revolution, of their socialist convictions, and of their own deep-seated grievances against the Kremlin.

(d) The leadership of the Workers Councils failed to turn toward the workers in the capitalist countries for help in preventing the imperialists from taking advantage of the situation.

(e) The leadership of the Workers Councils failed to arouse every section of the populace to its stake in the victory and failed to mobilize the nation for all-out military defense.

(f) The leadership of the Workers Councils made a fatal mistake in taking for good coin the promises of the Moscow bureaucrats to reform and to end the occupation.

(g) The leadership of the Workers Councils failed to anticipate Moscow's readiness to drown the revolution in blood and were therefore caught by surprise when the counter-revolutionary attack came.

Had the Workers Councils asserted their power, as they would have under a revolutionary-socialist leadership, this would have signified the doom of the Moscow bureaucracy, for their political appeals and resolute actions at the head of the revolution would have resounded through the length and breadth of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, bringing the masses to their feet with the blazing conviction that this marked the return to Lenin, the regeneration of the workers state.<sup>2</sup>

Of all the "forms of political expression" required by the Hungarian workers, the SWP insisted:

The most necessary of all is the party, which brings conscious leadership to its highest expression. How bright the prospects are for the rise of a revolutionary-socialist party among the workers of the Soviet bloc can be judged from many of the slogans that appeared in the Hungarian revolution. These slogans were the products of thinking minds who, perhaps without even knowing it as yet, came to Trotskyist conclusions.<sup>3</sup>

Summing up the lessons of the bloody struggle, the SWP wrote, "By its exposure of the counter-revolutionary nature of Stalinism the Hungarian revolution has further dissipated the baneful influence of Stalinism among the socialist minded workers of the world. This has opened new possibilities for the regroupment of the revolutionary vanguard under the banner of Leninism and Trotskyism."<sup>4</sup>

The strength of this statement, and what set it apart from the sterile "objectivist" apologetics typical of Pabloism, was that it not only condemned Stalinism and asserted the vindication of Trotskyism. It sought to demonstrate, out of the experience of the first political revolution, the historic necessity of the Fourth International in the preparation and organization of the armed overthrow of the Stalinist bureaucracy.

The Pabloites' complete rejection of this revolutionary, i.e., Trotskyist, perspective was recorded in their first major statement on Stalinism after the Hungarian Revolution, an infamous resolution which was adopted, about a half-year after it was written, at the revisionists' Fifth World Congress in October 1957. Its title, "Rise, Decline and Perspectives for the Fall of Stalinism," was suggestive of the same teleological outlook that permeated all the pretentious "theses" prepared by Mandel and Pablo. Their analysis was not focused on the active role of the working class and the tasks of the Fourth International in the struggle against the bureaucracy. Rather, they were "above all concerned with defining the precise conditions for the fall of Stalinism."<sup>5</sup>

This inquiry entailed an investigation of how the bureaucracy, reflecting the pressure of abstract and mysterious

world-historical forces, divined and interpreted by Mandel from a writing table in his Belgian listening post, was liquidating, in semi-automatic fashion, even against its own wishes, its Stalinist heritage. Khrushchev, declared Mandel, had set in motion an inexorable process of self-transformation: "But despite the desperate resistance of this bureaucracy, despite the steps backward, the delays, and even the reactions shown in this or that field, the battle for freedom of thought in the USSR won at the XXth Congress tremendous victories whose effects cannot be wiped out."<sup>6</sup>

Despite all the double-talk in which Mandel generally cloaked his revisions of Trotskyist theories, that statement made it clear that the Pabloites defined the bureaucracy, or at least sections of it, as the protagonist of the struggle against Stalinism. The great political challenge facing Mandel, therefore, was to explain the origins of that progressive faction. This he accomplished in his usual oracular style: "Under the pressure of the masses and of a discontent that was beginning to take on a political aspect, the leading nucleus of the bureaucracy was torn into various tendencies: a tendency in favor of major concessions to the masses (Malenkov-Mikoyan?); a tendency for stiffening the dictatorship (Kaganovich-Molotov?); a "centrist" tendency (Khrushchev-Bulganin)."<sup>7</sup> (Mandel's question marks.)

Enraptured by the achievements of Khrushchev and his cohorts, Mandel proclaimed, "By destroying in so thorough a fashion the authority of Stalin, the incarnation of all bureaucratic autocracy, they definitively undermined the authority and spirit of bureaucratic command at every level."<sup>8</sup>

To make such a sweeping claim amounted to denying the historical necessity of the political revolution through the armed uprising of the Soviet proletariat. After all, the authority of the bureaucracy, according to Mandel, had already been "definitively undermined" by the actions of the Twentieth Congress. Nor was that all. Peering intensely into his crystal ball, Mandel predicted a glorious future for progressive sections of the Stalinist bureaucracy in Eastern Europe. Adopting his favorite stance as an adviser to the bureaucracy, rather than its revolutionary opponent, Mandel

suggested that its "left" elements could make successful use of national feelings:

The opposition within the CPs capitalizes on national feeling. The struggle for the "national road toward socialism" thus takes on there a highly progressive and revolutionary value, contrary to that in the CPs of the West, where it generally covers up a turn toward codified rightist opportunism. Gomulka in Poland, Nagy in Hungary, tomorrow perhaps HERNSTEDT or ACKERMANN in East Germany, by becoming in the eyes of the masses symbols of a struggle for national emancipation are creating favorable conditions for a renewal of popularity for the CP (through its "national" tendency) and permitting the political revolution under oppositional communist leadership to mobilize national feeling in its favor....<sup>9</sup>

Nowhere was the contrast between the line of the Pabloites and that of the SWP more obvious than in their respective appraisals of the role of Tito, who had stabbed the Hungarian workers in the back by siding with Moscow in the suppression of their revolution. The SWP denounced this betrayal bitterly:

Tito played a despicable role during the Hungarian revolution. He did not lift a finger to help the fighters and ended up by condemning and slandering them. When the cards were down, the fact that Tito represents simply a variety of Stalinism proved decisive — despite his differences with Khrushchev & Co. Because of his critical attitude and his reputation for independence, Tito's arguments in defense of Moscow were far more effective than anything that came out of Moscow itself.<sup>10</sup>

The Pabloites, on the other hand, skipped lightly over Tito's perfidious role, which settled all questions about his relation to Stalinism, to stress, once again in the same objectivist fashion, his "highly progressive role in the international communist movement, during the whole crucial period of preparation for the XXth Congress of the CP of the USSR."<sup>11</sup>

Trotsky had branded the Stalinist bureaucracy as "counter-revolutionary through and through," and had always insisted on the necessity of constructing within the Soviet Union a section of the Fourth International as the new revolutionary party of the working class. Mandel's perspec-

tive proceeded entirely from the belief that the Soviet and Eastern European bureaucracies were incubating revolutionary tendencies. Insofar as the actions of Soviet leaders encouraged the development of such tendencies, as, according to Mandel, Khrushchev did through his denunciation of Stalin and his rehabilitation of Tito, they, too, "played a highly progressive, and even objectively revolutionary, role within the respective CPs."<sup>12</sup>

In his analysis of the events in Poland, Mandel insisted that the role of the proletarian revolutionary vanguard was not to be played by the Fourth International, but rather by the "left" forces inside the bureaucracy: "The degree to which the Left tendency remains faithful to its programme, applies it in practice, and binds itself ever more closely to the proletariat, will determine its capacity to fulfill completely the role of Leninist guide to the Polish working class."<sup>13</sup>

This was certainly one Pablo-Mandel prediction that went awry. Instead of evolving into a "Leninist guide" to the Polish proletariat, the "Left" tendency reorganized the bureaucracy, resumed under the leadership of Gomulka the suppression of the working class, and was, by 1970, so thoroughly hated that it was overthrown after strikes and bloody demonstrations.

By time the Pabloites' Fifth World Congress opened in the autumn of 1957, Mandel was describing even the Soviet Communist Party as an organization teeming with revolutionary forces: "The trade-union cadres in the factories, the secretaries of the factory cells of the C.P., even leaders of districts, small towns, and sometimes even provincial cities, especially the Komsomols, can thus become true transmission belts of the proletarian currents which are crystallizing in society. And from their ranks there may appear future Nagys and Gomulkas, perhaps even future Bolshevik leaders."<sup>14</sup>

Only one conclusion could be drawn from Mandel's analysis: that there existed no need for any sort of politically independent Trotskyist party in either the Soviet Union or Eastern Europe, for the revolutionary forces were maturing inside the existing Stalinist organizations. Through the political development of these forces, automatically and unconsciously reflecting the pressure and will of the masses,



the old Stalinist regime was being liquidated. Or so Mandel claimed. In reality, it was the revolutionary perspective of Trotskyism that was being liquidated.

In a letter to Cannon May 10, 1957, Gerry Healy reviewed the content of the "Decline and Fall" and summed it up succinctly:

Here you have the double talk of the Third Congress brought up to date. With all the bitter experience of the Hungarian Revolution at our disposal, once again a question mark is placed over the role of the bureaucracy in the political revolution. How can you build mass Trotskyist parties with such a policy? And in fact Pablo doesn't believe that you can. Study the document from the first page to the last and you will not find a single call for the construction of Trotskyist parties in the USSR, China, or Eastern Europe. Was that not one of the main reasons for the split in 1953?<sup>15</sup>

Healy's letter was written in response to an abrupt change in the policy of the SWP toward relations with the Pabloites. Given the unmistakable differences in the official line of the SWP toward the Hungarian Revolution and that of the International Secretariat — the latter showing no signs whatever of retreating from its revisionist conceptions — the British Trotskyists were taken aback by the favorable reaction of Cannon to a new appeal by the Sri Lankan LSSP for talks with the Pabloites aimed at the resolution of the 1953 split and the reunification of the Fourth International.

The arguments advanced by LSSP Secretary Leslie Goonewardene in a letter to Cannon January 2, 1957 exhibited the same opportunist slurring over of political differences which generally characterized the work of the Ceylonese centrists. In seeking to entice the SWP, Goonewardene substituted flattery and expediency for principles: "An international Trotskyist movement without the SWP is a wounded international movement, just as an SWP outside such a movement is a grievously weakened SWP. Thus, whatever our differences, we also require each other."<sup>16</sup>

Any proposal emanating from the LSSP for talks with the Pabloites was doubly suspect. Having played a despicable role in bolstering Pablo's authority through its opposition to the

"Open Letter," the LSSP, following the split, moved steadily to the right, adapting ever more openly to bourgeois nationalists in Ceylon, as well as to the Stalinists.

Even as Cannon pondered the LSSP proposal and submitted it for consideration to the SWP leadership, he was well aware of the increasingly treacherous policies of Goonewardene and his associates. Cannon knew that the January 31, 1957 issue of the LSSP newspaper *Samasamajist* carried an editorial "Tribute to Chou En-lai," which amounted to a dishonest coverup of the counterrevolutionary role of Stalinism. It declared, "Despite our political differences we recognize the tremendous sacrifices made by these men who led the Chinese Revolution to victory."<sup>17</sup> This tribute made no reference to the plight of the imprisoned Chinese Trotskyists nor to the Chinese Stalinists' defense of Khrushchev's actions in Hungary.

The unmistakable signs of the LSSP's opportunist orientation became even clearer one week later, when the February 7 issue of *Samasamajist* announced that the party's leaders had been invited to visit China by Chou En-lai. There could no longer be any doubt about the essential political content of the LSSP's alliance with the Pabloites and its call for reunification. The LSSP centrists wanted an international organization, based on opportunism, to neutralize genuine Trotskyists within its own organization and internationally and thus provide a political cover for its preparations for a massive betrayal of the Ceylonese working class.

On March 11, 1957, the *Militant* carried an extraordinary editorial publicly criticizing the LSSP:

We would like to remind our comrades of the LSSP of Ceylon of fundamental conceptions that Trotskyists have always been careful to make clear:

Chou En Lai and the Chinese Communist Party did not lead "the Chinese revolution to victory," nor can they legitimately be identified with that victory. For many years during the civil war after 1945, the Chinese CP tried to conciliate Chiang Kai-shek, offering to subordinate the revolutionary forces to the Chinese dictator, the puppet of U.S. imperialism.<sup>18</sup>

Pointing to the treatment of the partisans of the Fourth International in China, the *Militant* advised, "The Ceylonese Trotskyists should, in our opinion, lend strong support to the demand for the liberation of our Chinese comrades and for full democratic rights for the Chinese working class. Only workers' democracy can make the victory of the Chinese revolution secure, assure its progress, and serve to advance the struggle for socialism in the whole of Asia."<sup>19</sup>

Goonewardene and Colvin De Silva were to ignore that advice, and the behavior of the LSSP delegation while in China was an affront to the principles of Trotskyists all over the world. The delegates flatly refused to raise the issue of the imprisoned Trotskyists with the Chinese Stalinists!

Cannon knew the true worth of the LSSP leaders. Nevertheless, in a letter written to Goonewardene on March 12, 1957, just one day after the publication of the *Militant* editorial, he responded favorably to the LSSP's proposals for discussions with the Pabloites aimed at reunification:

A consistent approach of both sides toward common positions on the political questions of the day would justify a deliberate and serious attempt at reunification, even if some of the important differences of general conception remain unresolved. It would not be wise to pretend that these differences do not exist or try to get around them by ambiguous compromise formulations which would be subject to different interpretations. It would be better and more realistic to contemplate a possible unification for common political action, and to agree to disagree on some questions, allowing the test of events and clarifying non-factional discussion to bring about an eventual settlement.<sup>20</sup>

This was a complete about-face for Cannon, who had explained again and again that any attempt to orchestrate reunification with the Pabloites by suppressing important issues of principle would disorient the Trotskyist movement in the US and all over the world. But it was not only Cannon whose position had changed. The central leadership of the SWP fully supported this shift on the question of reunification. At a meeting of the SWP Political Committee on that same March 12, Morris Lewitt gave a political report which endorsed Cannon's letter, even though he conceded that Pablo

had never repudiated his past line.

On the contrary, Pablo and his supporters claim they have been right all the time and have been vindicated by the events. They do all this by conveniently forgetting their false prognostications and claiming credit for analyses and prognoses which derived not from Pablo's specific line but from that of Trotskyism.

Be that as it may, we cannot justify the continuation of a split because the Pabloites refuse to admit they were wrong in the past, unless the wrong line of the past continues to determine the course today. This does not seem to be the case. Pablo is moving away from the specific line which inspired a liquidationist wing in the FI.<sup>21</sup>

The claim that Pablo was "moving away" from a liquidationist position was totally untrue, a flimsy cover for a clear political retreat by the SWP from the struggle against revisionism.

To understand how and why this happened, especially since it appeared that the SWP was still defending basic Trotskyist principles, it is necessary to study the internal evolution of the SWP itself. Such a study proves irrefutably that the decision to seek reunification with the Pabloites was directly bound up with a decisive turn toward petty-bourgeois radicalism in the United States. For this reason, Cannon's letter to Goonewardene was a milestone in the degeneration of the Socialist Workers Party.

# 24

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## The SWP's "Regroupment" Fiasco

The change in the attitude of the Socialist Workers Party toward the Pabloite International Secretariat — that is, its desire to negotiate an end to the split on the basis of a "concrete" agreement on current tasks, without a theoretical and political accounting of the fundamental differences on perspective and method which gave rise to the 1953 explosion — was inextricably linked with a sharp shift away from its traditional proletarian orientation. With the adoption of the "regroupment" policy in December 1956, the SWP embarked upon a course directed toward the poisonous milieu of American middle-class radicalism and away from the struggle for Trotskyism in the working class.

The relation between the regroupment policy pursued by the SWP within the United States and its new interest in reunification with the Pabloites was indicated by Cannon in a letter to the political committee March 12, 1957, justifying his favorable reply to Goonewardene's proposal for discussions:

At a time when we are campaigning for regroupment of forces in this country and England, and are actually contemplating all kinds of possible cooperative relations and fusions with other tendencies which may begin to move in a revolutionary direction, we would certainly find it hard to explain why we refuse to even talk about unity with an international tendency which is taking a political position much closer to our own.

No, we cannot refuse to talk. My letter to Goonewardene takes the situation as it is and offers to discuss the question of unity.<sup>1</sup>

The background of the regroupment policy was the devastating crisis that had been unleashed in the American Communist Party by the exposure of Stalin's crimes and the brutal suppression of the Hungarian Revolution. The CPUSA had all the vices of its sister Stalinist organizations without their one saving virtue: a mass base in the working class. For decades, it had functioned as the most slavish supporter of Stalin's crimes. It had collaborated with the GPU, the Soviet secret police, in organizing the assassination of Leon Trotsky. It assisted the FBI in setting up the state frame-up which resulted in the jailing of SWP leaders during World War II.

Defending the Kremlin bureaucracy's betrayals, the CP acted in complete disregard of even the most elementary interests of the American working class. The term "Stalinist hack" — describing the CP functionaries in the trade unions who cynically sold out the rank and file in accordance with the foreign policy interests of the Soviet bureaucracy and whose methods differed little from those of the mafia hoodlums with whom the Stalinists frequently worked — entered into the everyday vocabulary of militant workers.

The innumerable betrayals perpetrated by the Stalinists, especially during World War II when they endorsed and enforced the no-strike pledge, built up a vast reservoir of distrust and hatred among wide sections of workers that right-wing bureaucrats like Reuther and Murray were able to exploit. The reactionary apostles of anticommunism in the labor movement had no greater weapon than the record of the Communist Party.

There were many courageous and self-sacrificing CP members who were genuinely devoted to the working class. But with the advent of the Cold War, the McCarthyite witch-hunt and the destruction of the big Stalinist apparatus in the trade unions, the politically-sincere CP militants were either driven out of the industries or survived by burying their political identity. Even before 1956, the Communist Party was a demoralized organization. So complete was the putrefaction of the CP leadership that it was incapable of

mounting any principled struggle against McCarthyism. Among the most terrible examples of the CP's prostration was its refusal to conduct a class defense of the Rosenbergs.

Two decades of systematic class collaboration had turned large sections of the CP membership into little more than dedicated liberals, who believed that the primary political task of American communists was to drum up support for the election of Democratic Party candidates.

The events of 1956 shattered the Communist Party. Thousands of members, who had grimly hung on to their membership cards during the worst period of the witch-hunt, reacted to the exposure of Stalin's crimes with horror. Then, the invasion of Hungary set off a mass exodus. The CP leadership divided into two basic tendencies. The faction of unreconstructed Kremlin lackeys, led by William Z. Foster (and supported by Gus Hall), simply waited for new instructions from Khrushchev, and were opposed to any discussion on the crisis within the Stalinist organizations.

The other faction, led by *Daily Worker* editor John Gates, while favoring extensive discussion, opposed Stalinism not from the standpoint of Marxism, but from that of petty-bourgeois democracy. By Stalinism, Gates understood not the betrayal of the world socialist revolution by a bureaucratic caste, but rather the suppression of democratic rights, thus mistaking an aspect of Stalinism for its essence. His political orientation, and those of his supporters, was not toward the building of a Marxist party, but toward the complete rejection of socialist revolution.

The Gatesites' inability to conduct a principled struggle against Stalinism, their mood of personal despair and open disavowal of the class struggle against capitalism, alienated whatever remained of proletarian elements inside the Communist Party, and played into the hands of unflinching lackeys of the Kremlin bureaucracy. The latter, Foster, Hall and Harry Winston, accused the Gatesites of being "liquidators" who were simply looking for an excuse to get out of the workers' movement. And there was more than a grain of truth in this accusation, however dishonest and cynical the intentions of the old Stalinist hacks.

Given the specific conditions which existed in the United States, the breakup of the Communist Party did not, in itself, immediately hold the promise of large-scale recruitment among workers. (In the struggle against Cochran, Cannon had shown that there no longer existed the broad layer of Stalinist workers that had in the 1930s and 1940s constituted a vanguard element in the trade unions, and that Cochran's use of Pablo's pro-Stalinist orientation was, in fact, a cynical cover for a complete abandonment of the struggle to build a revolutionary party in the working class.)

But the essential significance of the Stalinist crisis was not that it immediately provided opportunities for recruitment out of the CPUSA. Rather, the breakup of the CP marked a turning point in the long struggle that had been waged by the pioneers of American Trotskyism, and created unprecedented conditions for the political clarification of the working class and socialist-minded elements among the middle class and intellectuals.

The education of the new generation of workers, students and youth, who would inevitably be brought into political struggle by the insoluble world contradictions of American imperialism, required that the SWP uphold principles for which the international movement identified with Trotsky had fought since 1923. Thus, the task that confronted the SWP was to explain the historical and political significance of the life-and-death struggle that had been waged by Trotsky and his followers against Stalinism. While working out a patient and pedagogical approach to the heterogeneous forces that claimed to reject Stalinism, the SWP could in no way adapt to their confusion, evasions and self-justifications. Above all, it could not tolerate the perpetuation of the political essence of Stalinism — its rejection of world socialism in favor of peaceful coexistence, the usurpation of the political power of the proletariat by the privileged bureaucracy — in the name of a superficial rejection of Stalin the individual tyrant.

In other words, only by retracing the path of its own historical development, strengthening the old foundations and rebuilding upon them, could the SWP find a sure road to the vanguard elements of the working class. It was not wrong to propose a wide-ranging and comprehensive discussion with



all those forces, however confused, that had been set into motion by the breakup of the Communist Party. But that discussion had to be directed toward the clarification of the advanced elements within the working class.

Therefore, it was necessary to explain why the Trotskyists, and only the Trotskyists, had fought Stalinism on a principled basis, and how this struggle was bound up with the historical destiny of the American working class. Moreover, it was necessary to explain why so many American radicals, whatever their intentions, had been so easily duped by Stalinism and wound up sanctioning, if not directly participating in, its crimes.

But in initiating its regroupment policy, the SWP directed its arguments not to the working class, which it should have been seeking to educate, but to the Gatesites, the intellectuals, radicals and "left" liberals who constituted the periphery of the CP and who had been set adrift by its collapse. For this very reason, the approach of the SWP was wrong. Rather than intensifying its struggle for Trotskyist principles, which now were being vindicated in great international events, the SWP began to downplay its historical identity to avoid offending the sensibilities of the forlorn ex-Stalinists and their radical, semiradical and liberal friends.

Petty organizational calculations, rather than principled considerations, became the basis of the SWP's regroupment policy. Its initial insistence that regroupment required political clarification was dropped. Regroupment became a means of adapting the SWP, politically and ideologically, to the amorphous milieu of American radicalism and its petty-bourgeois democratic perspective.

Worst of all, the SWP's definition of regroupment marked a retreat from the conception that the SWP was *the* revolutionary vanguard of the working class, the only genuine representative of its historic interests, and that to it fell the task of resolving the crisis of leadership.

The liquidationist perspective which underlay the regroupment policy was spelled out at the SWP Seventeenth National Convention in June 1957. In his political report, Farrell Dobbs held out the prospect that regroupment would lead to the

creation of a new revolutionary party by unifying the fragmented remains of the old radical elements that had been jogged loose from their old niches by the Stalinist crisis. "We do not make a fetish of the organizational question," Dobbs declared. "We are entirely flexible as to the ultimate form of the party that will emerge from the regroupment process."<sup>2</sup>

Cannon provided the theoretical justification for the SWP's liquidationist policy. According to the convention report published in the *Militant*:

Cannon noted that the revolutionary regroupment in 1917-19, which gained its impetus and inspiration from the Russian Revolution, brought together in the young Communist Party of the U.S. elements from all the organized radical tendencies — the Socialist Party, the IWW and even the Socialist Labor Party. He pointed out that Louis C. Fraina, one of the most influential figures in the early years of the American Communist movement, began his socialist activities in the sectarian SLP.<sup>3</sup>

Cannon's arguments were based on a false and preposterous analogy. To compare the situation after 1956 to that which had existed in 1917 was not merely to indulge one's imagination. It was to falsify history and justify liquidationism. There existed no legitimate comparison between the fiery labor agitators, antiwar militants and idealistic socialist intellectuals who, disgusted by the opportunism of the Socialist Party and inspired by the example of Bolshevism, formed the American Communist Party, and the tired, cynical, complacent and generally well-heeled anti-Stalin Stalinists, ex-Stalinists, ex-fellow travelers, ex-Wallaceites, and well-meaning liberals with whom the SWP was now proposing to regroup.

Moreover, the "regroupment" of 1917-1919 took place beneath the impact of the greatest revolutionary upsurge of the international proletariat in world history. The regroupment within the United States directly expressed an organic process of differentiation within the labor movement. The new stage of the class struggle, bound up with the transformation of the United States into the world's premier imperialist power, dealt the death blow to both the revolutionary

syndicalism of the IWW and the Debsian conception of socialism.

Cannon's role in initiating and supporting the regroupment policy marked the political end of his long struggle to build the Trotskyist movement. When viewed in the context of Cannon's political biography, it is clear that his approach to regroupment was not simply an episodic error. It marked a break with fundamental political conceptions that had animated his work in the labor movement since 1918-19, when he recognized the need for the formation in the United States of the type of party that Lenin had built in Russia.

Cannon's development as a party leader, as an American Bolshevik, proceeded through a critique of not only IWW syndicalism, but also of the Debsian conception of a socialist party. Cannon became the implacable foe of the "all-inclusive" party open to all those who mistakenly believe themselves to be socialists.

For Cannon, socialism had meant class war against capitalism, and the party that professed to fight for socialism had to recruit new members and train its cadre on that basis. The organizational principles adopted by the SWP at its founding convention in 1938 declared:

The revolutionary Marxian party rejects not only the arbitrariness and bureaucratism of the Communist Party, but also the spurious and deceptive "all-inclusiveness" of the Thomas-Tyler-Hoan Socialist Party, which is a sham and a fraud. Experience has proved conclusively that this "all-inclusiveness" paralyzes the party in general and the revolutionary left-wing in particular... The SWP seeks to be inclusive only in this sense, that it accepts into its ranks those who accept its program and denies admission to those who reject its program.<sup>4</sup>

As late as 1955, in an article honoring the centennial anniversary of Debs's birth, Cannon stressed that the old pioneer's greatest failing had been his false conception of the party, his failure to understand that a revolutionary organization cannot be based on "all-inclusiveness," his toleration of opportunist tendencies inside the party and its leadership, and his avoidance of factional struggle.

Cannon argued passionately that Debs's "mistaken theory of the party was one of the most costly mistakes a revolutionist ever made in the entire history of the American movement." It was impossible to overthrow capitalism with a party based on Debs's theory of all-inclusiveness. "As we see it now, in the light of what we have learned from the Russian Revolution and its aftermath, nine-tenths of the struggle for socialism is the struggle against bourgeois influence in the workers' organizations, including the party."<sup>5</sup>

The founding of the Communist Party, Cannon explained:

represented, not simply a break with the old Socialist Party, but even more important a break with the whole conception of a common party of revolutionists and opportunists. That signified a new beginning for American socialism, far more important historically than everything that had happened before, including the organization of the Socialist Party in 1901. There can be no return to the outlived and discredited experiment of the past....

The struggle against the crimes and betrayals of Stalinism, the prerequisite for the construction of an honest revolutionary party, requires weapons from a different arsenal. Here also the Russians are our teachers. The programmatic weapons for the fight against Stalinist treachery were given to us by Trotsky, the coequal and successor of Lenin.

There can be no return to the past of the American movement. In connection with the Debs Centennial some charlatans, who measure the worth of a socialist movement by its numerical strength at the moment, have discovered new virtues in the old Socialist Party, which polled so many votes in the time of Debs, and have recommended a new experiment on the same lines. Besides its worthlessness as advice to the socialist vanguard that prescription does an injustice to the memory of Debs.<sup>6</sup>

And yet, with the adoption of the regroupment policy, Cannon reverted to the very political conceptions whose bankruptcy he had so clearly analyzed. On March 1, 1958, as the regroupment policy was rapidly degenerating into a shabby electoral farce, Cannon shared a platform with Vincent Hallinan, a longtime Stalinist fellow traveler and 1952 presidential candidate of the capitalist Progressive

Party, to speak on "United Socialist Action in 1958 and the Outlook for American Socialists." Cannon's speech was a sentimental and nostalgic appeal for a return to the past:

The basic aim in rebuilding for the future — as I think all present will agree — the basic aim for which we are all striving, is to regroup the scattered socialist forces, and eventually to get all honest socialists together in one common party organization. But that can't be done in a day. The experience of the last two years shows that it will take time. We'll have to take the process of collaboration and unification in stages, one step at a time.

The starting point of the process is for all genuine socialists of all tendencies, whether presently affiliated to one organization or another, or independent at present, to recognize that we are all part of one movement, and that we ought to work together fraternally in one field of action after another, work together against the injustices and oppressions of capitalism. That sounds almost like a revolutionary assertion after the terrible experience of the disruption of solidarity. But it used to be the unvarying practice and tradition of the old socialist and radical movement in America.<sup>7</sup>

Cannon's renunciation of the Lenin-Trotsky conception of the party meant that he had given up on the struggle for Marxism in the working class, a struggle which finds its most intense expression in the fight against the pressures of hostile class forces as they are reflected, politically, theoretically, and organizationally, within the party. For years, Cannon had been on the left wing of the party leadership. Without the intervention of Cannon in 1952-53, the Cochranites would have won a majority in the SWP, almost by default. When the struggle began, Cannon was in a minority in the SWP leadership, and only with the greatest difficulty was he able to win a majority within the leadership and rally the party membership.

But even after the split, the political pressures which had given rise to Pabloite revisionism continued to bear down on the SWP and move it to the right. The protracted economic boom, the quiescence of the labor movement, the stranglehold of the bureaucracy over the unions, and the lingering effects

of the anticommunist hysteria had built up enormous pressures on the cadre of the SWP.

Cannon's resistance to these class pressures had collapsed by 1957. This was the meaning of his acceptance of regroupment, his turn toward reunification and his reversion to the Debsian conception of the all-inclusive party. Exhausted and unable to fight opportunism, Cannon became an opportunist.

Throughout 1957, the SWP worked to cultivate relations with the jetsam and flotsam of disintegrating Stalinism and senile American radicalism, that is, with the veteran professional practitioners of reformist protest politics. In May 1957, the SWP "greeted with enthusiasm" the formation of the American Socialist Forum, which it viewed as a crucial development in the regroupment process.

The 40-member national committee of the forum included, in addition to Farrell Dobbs, the pacifist A.J. Muste (who served as the forum's chairman), John T. McManus of the *National Guardian* and former supporter of Wallace's bourgeois Progressive Party, Stalinist W.E.B. Dubois, Stalinist fellow traveler Waldo Frank, Gatesite Joseph Starobin, radical Dave Dellinger, and Pabloites Bert Cochran and Mike Bartell (Zaslow). To claim that out of such an assemblage could come "a reinvigorated socialist movement in the United States" was to defraud the working class and deceive the SWP membership.<sup>8</sup>

To accommodate the bones of all the skeletons rattling in the closets of the forum's national committee members would have required the renting of a spacious New York warehouse. The SWP was acting as if the past no longer mattered at all. More than 20 years had passed since Muste's brief association with Trotskyism had ended. He was as far from revolution as the man in the moon. Moreover, to sit on a committee with Cochran and Bartell, who had long since split with the Pabloites to move even further to the right, signified that the SWP had already, as far as its work in the United States was concerned, disavowed 1953.

Cochran and Clarke had been expelled precisely because they rejected the SWP's claim to be the party of socialist revolution in the United States. They had insisted that the

SWP was nothing more than one small eddy in the broad socialist current out of which the revolutionary party would eventually emerge. By 1958 the SWP fully accepted this conception. Marking the anniversary of the SWP's founding, the *Militant* proclaimed in an editorial:

Socialist Workers Party members are proud of their party and its 20-year record. But such pride in no way blinds them or is in conflict with their first allegiance — to the socialist interests of the working class. They are therefore hopeful that out of the conscientious re-examination of ideas now going on, and out of the increasingly free and frank discussions now taking place among groups and individuals of different political persuasions, there will emerge the will to regroup now divided forces on the road to building a party in the U.S. capable of guiding the struggle for socialism to success.<sup>9</sup>

The liquidationist content of the regroupment policy found its clearest expression in the SWP's involvement in the farcical "independent socialist" campaign of 1958. All remaining pretenses that regroupment was merely a tactic aimed at exploiting the crisis of Stalinism in order to win new forces to Trotskyism were abandoned as the SWP threw itself into the task of uniting all "socialist" forces behind common gubernatorial and senatorial candidates in the New York State elections. In an official "Proposal to the Radical Movement," the SWP proclaimed its willingness to accept an electoral program based on a minimal platform upon which everyone to the left of the Democratic Party could agree.

In formulating the proposal for a "united socialist" campaign, the SWP formed the closest working relations with the *Guardian* group. This was, in itself, indicative of the change that had occurred within the SWP. In 1955, the SWP had explicitly rejected a call written by John T. McManus, a leader of the group, for a "united socialist" ticket. Cannon, in a letter to Murray Weiss March 4, 1955, spoke of McManus and Co. with unconcealed contempt:

The American Guardian Monthly Review outfit, as far as I know ... does not object to the general ideology of Stalinism on any important point. They are willing to endorse everything from the Moscow Trials to the Second World War and the pacifist ballyhoo for co-existence, if only they

are allowed to do it as an independent party... The great bulk of these dissident Stalinists are worn-out people, incurably corrupted by Stalinist ideology, who haven't the slightest intention or capacity to do anything but grumble at the official CP and to demand a stagnant little pond of their own to splash in.<sup>10</sup>

The adoption of the regroupment policy strengthened the most right-wing elements in the SWP, and they welcomed the election campaign as a means of finally getting rid of all the unwanted "Trotskyist baggage," which they held responsible for the isolation of the party. The foremost representative of the right wing was Murray Weiss, who vehemently defended liquidationism against the critics of regroupment inside the SWP.

Praising the election campaign, Weiss declared:

Our proposal was essentially very simple: socialists should get together to oppose the capitalist system and its two parties in the state elections. What socialists? Those socialists that took the name socialism seriously enough to oppose capitalist parties and politicians. On what program? On a program that could be agreed upon among those willing to join together as socialists against the capitalist parties. And we had a suggested outline of what such a minimum program should be. This approach left it to the struggle to decide what forces within the radical movement would be ready to move in this common direction of socialist class struggle politics.<sup>11</sup>

The alliance formed by the SWP with the New York petty bourgeoisie was unprincipled and reactionary. "Many of our allies in this bloc don't agree that it is an elementary principle of socialism never to make coalitions with capitalist parties," Weiss blandly admitted.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, in the interests of concluding the electoral deal, the SWP shamefully renounced Trotskyism by capitulating to the pro-Stalinist sympathies of the *Guardian* representatives with whom the SWP was working. Weiss described the SWP's capitulation:

In alliance with others in the bloc we insisted that it was necessary to have an unambiguous statement on socialism and democracy in the platform; a statement that would clearly oppose the bureaucratic dictatorship of Stalinism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. We argued that



only by doing this could we go to the voters with a message of socialism that was not tainted with the crimes of Stalinism. We fought for this position pedagogically, but insistently.

However, in the course of many discussions we were unable to convince the representatives of the Guardian or the former ALP [American Labor Party] leaders on this point. While they would grant the correctness of a minimum stand for workers and socialist democracy everywhere, they argued that it had no place in a platform for an election in the U.S. They also contended that if we tried to get a minimum formulation on this question it would blow up the coalition, since there were many deep-going historical and theoretical differences that couldn't be reconciled in any minimum formulation. And they stubbornly persisted in refusing to agree to such a clause in the platform. We had to weigh the significance of this in determining our own course.

Was their refusal to agree to a simple statement opposing the bureaucratic practices of Stalinist regimes and championing the cause of socialist democracy a sign that they were simply captives of the Kremlin, just like the CP leadership? If this were the case the possibility of a fruitful coalition with them in the elections would be extremely dubious. Or was it a sign of the continued pressure of Stalinism and that their break with the organized Stalinist movement was still incomplete. Our assessment was the latter. All the signs pointed to their eventual open break with Stalinism in which they would be compelled to denounce the crimes of the Stalinist bureaucracy. Whether this would lead them to agreement with our position or not was, of course, problematical. But we estimated that in the period of the election itself, they would be unable to hold on to a position of "dummying up" on socialism and democracy in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, etc.<sup>13</sup>

In order to accommodate the pro-Stalinist scoundrels, the SWP moved to repudiate publicly the political revolution against the Soviet bureaucracy. This job was eagerly undertaken by Joseph Hansen, a man capable of writing anything, in the Spring 1958 issue of the SWP's *International Socialist Review*:

The program of political revolution in the Soviet Union has been badly misunderstood — and sadly misinterpreted

— in the radical movement. It has been pictured as "revolutionary romanticism," a smoking-hot kind of sectarianism that rejects the struggle for reforms in principle, a remote-from-this-world attitude like that of the De Leonists, who haughtily scorn "mere" reforms and who will settle for nothing less than the whole hog delivered at the kitchen door. A more generous visualization sees something like a TV Western where the victimized cow hands organize a posse to shoot up the outlaws who have taken over the sheriff's office.

It is much closer to reality to view the program of political revolution as *the total series of reforms, gained through militant struggle, culminating in the transfer of power to the workers.*

No revolution comes in a single oversize dose like a horse pill. It develops in interlinked stages affecting interlinked fields. If any of the demands of any of the stages be viewed in isolation, or fixed as an end in itself rather than a means to a higher goal, it appears as a reform.<sup>14</sup> (Hansen's emphasis.)

In terms far more explicit than had ever been used by Pablo, Hansen outlined a process of democratic self-reform by the bureaucracy: "A section of the officialdom, the section that is capable of responding sensitively to the demands of the people, comes over to the workers at various speeds and in varying degrees, providing fresh sources of encouragement."<sup>15</sup>

Hansen was not finished. Using the opportunity that had been finally provided by regroupment, Hansen was determined to totally disassociate the SWP from any perspective for the violent revolutionary overthrow of the Kremlin bureaucracy:

To remove any further misunderstanding, I want to emphasize that political revolution is not proposed as a slogan for immediate action. Nor is it proposed as a slogan for agitation. It is a *strategic line* to be used as a guide for understanding and helping to shape coming events in the whole next historical period of Soviet development....

To those fellow socialists who have reached the conclusion that Stalinism must go but are undecided whether or not the bureaucracy can be reformed out of existence in one way or another, I am quite willing to let the test of further events

prove which program and perspective best fits the needs of the workers struggle amidst the new conditions of Soviet life.<sup>16</sup> (Hansen's emphasis.)

The independent socialist campaign ended as a complete debacle for the SWP. It even accepted the decision that none of the "socialist candidates" would be associated with the SWP. The nomination for New York Senator went instead to the millionaire pacifist and former Moscow Trials-enthusiast Corliss Lamont. The nomination for Governor went to John T. McManus. For Lieutenant Governor, the "United Socialist Party" nominated another displaced liberal "friend of the Soviet Union," Dr. Annette Rubinstein. The selections were hailed by the *Militant* as "A Great Step Forward": "Corliss Lamont, John T. McManus and Dr. Annette Rubinstein are to be congratulated for undertaking the campaign for peace and socialism. Their long and courageous record of opposition to the cold war and witch hunt gives assurance that they will wage a militant campaign that will strengthen the socialist cause."<sup>17</sup>

For the SWP to have associated itself with, let alone praised, the candidacy of Corliss Lamont was irrefutable evidence of its political decay. The millionaire Lamont was the quintessential embodiment of that broad category of frightened liberals, radical tourists, and professional humanitarians known as fellow travelers. Lamont's acceptance letter gives an indication of his reactionary political outlook: "In the view of the crisis in the Middle East and the other international issues facing the United States and the world, I intend to stress in my campaign the questions of peace, disarmament and international cooperation both inside and outside of the United Nations."<sup>18</sup>

In addition to his faith in the United Nations, Lamont firmly believed that "a summit meeting" between Eisenhower and Khrushchev "to work out international issues" would represent a major gain for the cause of peaceful coexistence. In fact, a resolution dealing with the Lebanon crisis passed at the United Socialist Party rally declared: "The hope for peace by peoples everywhere is now focussed on the summit meeting scheduled at the United Nations...."<sup>19</sup>

Corliss Lamont's "militant campaign" reached its climax with the issuing of a "10-Point Peace Program" which included ... the firing of Secretary of State John Foster Dulles! Speaking on statewide radio on September 26, Lamont amplified on this astonishing proposal: "If international peace is to come, Secretary Dulles must go! In the interests of America and all humanity, it is time for President Eisenhower to dismiss Mr. Dulles as his Secretary of State. I suggest that Harold Stassen, a member of his own party, who has worked hard and sincerely for disarmament, should replace him."<sup>20</sup>

Three days later, the *Militant* endorsed Lamont's call for the removal of the secretary of state in an editorial entitled "Dulles Must Go!":

For millions of people across the globe, John Foster Dulles has become the dread, hated symbol of the reactionary American foreign policy that keeps the world in constant peril of atomic war. Here at home there is also a developing popular opposition to the Secretary of State and to the insane policy of "brinkmanship" associated with his name. There is every justification for the growing demand that "Dulles must go!"<sup>21</sup>

The SWP was not merely adapting itself to Lamont. Its endorsement of Lamont's proposal that American imperialism give itself a face-lift flowed organically out of a capitulation to bourgeois democracy that had been foreshadowed in its call for the use of federal troops in the South. If Eisenhower could be called upon to defend democratic rights in Mississippi, why could he not be prevailed upon to hire a new secretary of state who would do the same thing on a world scale?

It was left to Murray Weiss to find the most profound reason for supporting Lamont's call for the removal of Dulles. It reminded him, he said, of the Bolsheviks' call in 1917 for the removal of the 10 capitalist ministers!

Only those who steadfastly refuse to study the real political evolution of the SWP after 1957 — its treacherous repudiation of the *Transitional Program* and the foundations of Trotskyism, its obscene capitulation to the dregs of American radicalism, and its rejection of the struggle for workers' power in favor of a program of middle-class protest — can seriously

claim that the reunification with the Pabloites arose simply because of agreement on the nature of the Cuban Revolution.

The SWP could not write flattering editorials about Annette Rubinstein and Corliss Lamont and simultaneously denounce Pablo's betrayal of Trotskyism. Well before Castro descended from the Sierra Madre and made his triumphal march into Havana, the SWP had made a somewhat less glorious entry into the camp of the American petty bourgeoisie. That is what brought the SWP back to the Pabloites and placed its break from the International Committee and its reunification with the International Secretariat on the agenda.

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## The British Trotskyists Oppose Unprincipled Unity

The SWP's decision in March 1957 to seriously consider reunification with the Pabloites, based on "concrete" agreements on immediate goals and tasks, without any discussion on the political differences which had produced the split in 1953, encountered opposition from the British section of the International Committee, led by Gerry Healy. In a letter to Tom Kerry, a leading SWP member, April 11, 1957, Healy indicated that he was prepared to go along with a proposal for discussions with the Pabloites to test their "unity-mongering," but he warned, "The basic methodological differences between ourselves and Pablo remain and have not been eradicated despite the favourable objective situation. We should be completely clear on this score, and under no circumstances seek to minimise them. That could lead to serious miseducation."<sup>1</sup>

Several weeks later, on May 10, 1957, Healy wrote a detailed letter to Cannon in which he explained his concerns over a purely organizational approach to the question of reunification:

We do not see, and I am sure that you will agree, any reasons why our people should be stampeded into hasty conclusions. Because of our failure to appreciate the thoroughly revisionist character of the Third World Con-

gress decision, we paid a heavy price, which resulted in the disruption of the French section, and a situation where in 1953 we found ourselves trapped inside Pablo's organizational set-up which in turn forced us to move swiftly and issue the "Open Letter." We know now that not everybody was ready for this sharp break and again we had to pay a price which would undoubtedly have been less, on an international scale, had we alerted ourselves in time to the revisionism personified by Pablo-Germain and Co. It would be very wrong now if we were to get caught up in the exchange of organizational proposals no matter how well they are drafted on our side, and overlook the very deep-going political differences that exist....

Recently we have been reviewing the internal documents of our world movement since the end of the war, and it is quite clear that an objective study of that period is extremely important for the education of our cadres in the future. Pablo and Germain's double talk have had some terrible effects in the miseducation on our comrades on the continent, and this cannot be put right simply by declaring that the objective situation since the Twentieth Congress is very much in our favor. The Marxist education of our cadres has to take into account how Pablo and his tendency developed just as you were able to do in the books dealing with the struggle against Shachtman and Burnham. The objective situation is not sufficient by itself to do this. All sorts of tendencies ranging between opportunism and sectarianism are now raising their heads amongst those who are leaving the CP. Whilst a united Trotskyist movement could be an important rallying center, nevertheless if its basis rests upon lack of clarity and slurred over differences, a new crop of disastrous splits may well develop once again, even though we are working in a favorable objective situation....

We think therefore that the International Committee must theoretically prepare itself without any organizational hindrances. Even if Pablo and Co. accept every one of your points, members of the IC have the duty and responsibility to complete the preparation of their documents on world perspectives and to submit them for the discussion. A World Congress should not be rushed without adequate political preparation. Whilst this should be done in an objective fashion, everybody should have the right to speak out and get things clear. This does not mean giving way to

bull-headed factionalism, but facts are facts, and you cannot get around political differences by tactical plausibilities. Progress internationally can develop only from a firm political foundation. The British Section will never agree to anything which may cut across essential clarification. We have had our basinful of that sort of thing over Lawrence when Pablo and Clarke were jointly managing the Paris office. Time and again we hushed things up about his pro-Stalinist behaviour as editor of the "Socialist Outlook," on a request from the Pablo center. "Don't be too harsh with the comrade," they said, "he is sensitive, well-meaning, but a little confused." In the interests of unity we listened and by God we paid a bitter price. The "sensitive" Pablo turned out to be a raging Stalinist lion when the class pressures forced him on, and he almost disrupted the entire patient work of seven years. Ironically enough, this same Lawrence who fully supported the Soviet intervention in Hungary is now preparing to get thrown out of the Labour Party and join the Communist Party, when every self-respecting militant is preparing to leave it....

The strengthening of our cadres is decisive in this present period and this can only be done in a thoroughgoing education around the problems of revisionism. That is the most important conscious role which our movement has to play....

We realize in writing all this to you that, to use an English phrase, we are "carrying coals to Newcastle." The movement here has been largely educated on the rich experiences of the SWP in its long struggle for principles. We would like to believe today we are reaching a position where we can help our American comrades as a result of the favorable conditions under which we work. Since the Pablo split we have gone forward as never before in our history. The sharpening of our principles which was a direct gain from the split greatly helped us and politically tuned up our movement so that it was able to take full advantage of the Twentieth Congress.<sup>2</sup>

Were Healy to review this letter today, he would probably not recognize himself as its author. The struggle against Pabloism has long ceased to preoccupy him: after all, according to Healy, that is only of concern to "propagandists," "pure socialists," "Trotskyite groupos," etc. He now considers the defense of program and principles "reaction-



ary." Nothing matters except his own "dialectical" cognition, as Healy fraudulently describes what is, in fact, nothing else but the standard mixture of intuition and cunning which guides the political work of every pragmatic opportunist.

But in May 1957, Healy was a Trotskyist who understood that the building of a revolutionary party proceeded through the unrelenting theoretical, political and organizational struggle against revisionism.

The SWP leaders sensed a political threat in Healy's position. But attempting to persuade him to support their reunification movement, they made their own opportunism more explicit. On June 27, 1957, Farrell Dobbs wrote to Healy:

We can easily lose the advantage of a favorable objective situation if we were to behave in a narrow factional manner, or if we gave cause for anybody to charge that we are behaving in such a manner. The Pabloite appeal for unity must therefore be answered so as to leave no doubt that *we favor unity*. This is especially important when unity appears plausible and realistic, and when a continued split becomes more and more difficult to justify. The very fact that the press of the two tendencies speak in similar terms about the major world events leaves no other course for us but to say in no uncertain terms, "Yes, we are for unity."...

A unification would not at all mean the abandonment of the conquests of the split of 1953 which were in the main positive. It enabled us to overcome the liquidationist tendency with the least cost. It exposed Pabloism, its political line and organizational methods. It facilitated the consolidation of our tendency and the elaboration of our own political line on the major world problems in a series of documents written in the manner and tradition of orthodox Trotskyism. None of these gains will be abandoned in a unification. They remain the tools with which we operate. *Unity would only mean another form of struggle for the same ideas which had previously led to a split*. It would not mean acceptance of any of the Pabloite documents either of the Third or the Fourth Congresses. All these documents, including our own, are part of the record. So is the world reality these documents were supposed to depict. We believe the record is favorable to our tendency.

A discussion at the present time of this record would appear sterile because it would deal with events which have

receded into history and given way to new events which need examination and analysis. If the differences between the tendencies are to come to the fore once again, it is far better that they be based on new events and situations. The new people in the movement will more easily understand such disputes and the old ones will be freed from the need of self-justification and be able to reorient themselves more easily. Those who have gone through the split do not need such a discussion at this time. They had it when it had real meaning. Those who did not experience the split would only see in such a discussion a sectarian withdrawal from the world as it is today.<sup>3</sup>

For the first time, the SWP had made the connection between "sectarianism" and the struggle against Pabloism. But Healy was not intimidated and rejected Dobbs's arguments in a letter July 2, 1957:

A big majority of our members have been recruited since the split in 1953. They are in the main first-class people who are very interested in the history of our movement. We have not neglected this and recently we have stepped up the educational aspect of this work. It is not our experience that the history of the Pablo question appears sterile to newcomers. Provided it is presented properly, it can be a great source of concrete educational value.<sup>4</sup>

The seriousness of the difference between the position of the SWP, which clearly was prepared to shelve any consideration of the fundamental questions which provoked the split in favor of a specious reunification, and that of Healy was made explicit in the resolution, entitled "The Situation in the World Trotskyist Movement," passed by the Thirteenth Congress of the British Section in June 1957:

(1) The 13th Congress of the British Section of the Fourth International considers that the International unification of tendencies claiming to be Trotskyist, with the International Committee of the Fourth International (orthodox Trotskyists), must be based upon fundamental agreement on the principles and programme of the Fourth International as elaborated by the late Leon Trotsky and the 1938 Founding Conference of the Fourth International. This means rejection of all forms of revisionism of the State Capitalist, Shachtmanite, and Pabloite-Deutscher varieties, and the acceptance of the principle that it is necessary

to build sections of the Fourth International in all countries in the world dedicated respectively to the overthrow of Imperialism, and the political revolution against the Stalinist bureaucracies. Any form of organizational unity without basic political agreement would only lead to a further series of splits which would greatly hamper our international growth and development.

(2) Congress therefore recognizes that the attainment of unity must of necessity allow adequate time for discussion of the differences which exist, leading to the preparation of a world congress. It charges the incoming National Committee with the task of making a written analysis of the post-war political positions of our world movement and the elaboration of a basic document on world perspectives in collaboration with the sections affiliated to the International Committee.

(3) Congress maintains that the immediate practical side of a political unification must be taken in stages. It proposes to the International Committee that a parity committee consisting of the International Committee and Pablo representatives should draw up a memorandum of agreement on the issues where there is basic agreement. This joint body should constitute the leadership of the world movement and its primary task would be to prepare the Fourth World Congress of Unification. It would recommend to this congress that for the next period the International leadership be a parity leadership on all committees which would lead by persuading individuals and sections rather than by invoking the discipline of statutes. Only in this way will possibilities of principled unity of the Fourth International be realized.<sup>5</sup>

This proposal refutes the slanders peddled later on by Hansen that the British Trotskyists were opposed to unification. Healy was prepared to accept reunification on the basis of a thorough discussion of the fundamental questions confronting the world Trotskyist movement, which inevitably would have to deal with the differences which had given rise to the 1953 split.

Despite the outward appearance of formal cordiality in their letters, the British and the SWP were proceeding on the basis of opposed conceptions and heading in entirely different directions. What was at issue was not a dispute over tactics.

As we have already shown, the international policy of the SWP was the organic expression of its capitulation to the pressures of hostile class forces within the United States. The SWP — moving further and further away from the proletarian orientation upon which the party had been based — was already well on the way to becoming, via regroupment, a petty-bourgeois party of protest and social reform.

Its leaders instinctively felt the conflict between the demands of its regroupment work in the United States, based as it was on unprincipled accommodations to liberals, Stalinists and petty-bourgeois democrats of all varieties, and the implacable political and theoretical requirements of the international struggle against Pabloism. For the SWP to denounce Pabloism meant to denounce the very policies it was pursuing in the United States.

Cannon's angry outburst in a July 1957 letter to Tom Kerry against what he termed "the factional ultimatism of the British" meant that the SWP leaders now viewed the determination of their closest allies in the International Committee to prosecute the struggle against Pabloism as an obstacle to the political relations which they were cultivating in the United States.

The political content of Healy's so-called factional ultimatism was the powerful combination of unrelenting revolutionary activity inside the trade unions and Labour Party, with an intensive intervention into the Stalinist crisis on the basis of a defense of the historical, programmatic and theoretical heritage of Trotskyism. This assessment can be substantiated if we examine the development of the British section. Unfortunately, this requires that we return to the rantings of the wretched Michael Banda. Like all apostates, he harbors an almost neurotic hatred of his own past.

In his "27 Reasons," Banda presents an account of the history of the British section in the second half of the 1950s which is as politically incoherent as it is dishonest. Prevented by his envenomed subjectivism from acknowledging the great advances that were made during that crucial period by the British Trotskyists, to which he made no small contribution, Banda writes:

Far from having a revolutionary orientation the SLL became a new adaptation to the wretched syndicalism of Brian Behan, Pennington, et al. Healy made a virtue out of necessity by turning to the ex-CPers coming out of the 1956-57 crisis of Stalinism, but he had no perspectives either for the IC or the SLL. A careful study of the 1957 to 1960 literature (*Newsletter* and *Labour Review*) will bring out the unmistakable syndicalist trend of the SLL which was pragmatically combined with articles from Cdes Slaughter, Kemp and others on Marxism.

Banda's thumbnail sketch of this critical period in the development of the Trotskyist movement is not even based on a correct chronology of events. The Socialist Labour League was not founded until February 1959, and it was the direct product of the powerful and unrelenting three-year offensive against Stalinism that was mounted by the British Trotskyists almost from the moment Khrushchev's "secret speech" became known.

Banda's snide reference to Healy's decisive role in turning what was in early 1956 the very small forces of British Trotskyism, then known as the Group, toward the crisis of Stalinism, is simply absurd. To recognize historical necessity is, as far as Marxists are concerned, a political virtue.

It is to Healy's great credit as a revolutionary that he organized the intervention among Stalinist workers and intellectuals in 1956-57. The fact that he did so — recruiting such people as Peter Fryer, Cliff Slaughter and Tom Kemp in the process — is, in itself, a refutation of Banda's charge that Healy "had no perspectives either for the IC or the SLL." The real essence of Banda's charge is that he has repudiated the perspective that guided Healy's and his own work during that period: the building of the Fourth International.

As for his reference to Healy's supposed "adaptation to the wretched syndicalism of Brian Behan, Pennington, et al.," every time Banda refers to any sort of revolutionary activity inside the trade unions, he speaks only of "syndicalism" or "backward syndicalists." He is exposing only his own contempt for the workers' movement, not the supposedly incorrect policies of Healy in the Labour and trade union movement.

Moreover, Banda feels obliged to denounce the Marxist orientation to the working class fought for by Healy as "wretched syndicalism" because he seeks, as always, to conceal the class questions underlying all conflicts inside the Trotskyist movement.

The fact that the British Trotskyists were so deeply involved in the day-to-day struggles of the working class was no small factor in the development of their conflict with the Socialist Workers Party. The Trotskyist "Group" was carrying out intensive activity within the Labour Party and among the most militant sections of workers — for example among the members of the "blue union" (National Amalgamated Stevedores and Dockers) fighting the right-wing leadership of the T&GWU.

The *Newsletter*, founded in 1957 out of the intervention of the Trotskyists in the crisis of British Stalinism, served as a powerful weapon for Marxism inside the working class, and became a real force among advanced workers fighting against the treachery of the Gaitskell leadership of the Labour Party. Its campaigns attracted a broad following among militants and aroused the fury of the Trades Union Congress (TUC) and Labourite bureaucracy. The well-known Rank and File conferences organized by the *Newsletter* were attended by hundreds of workers. Precisely because the British Trotskyists, unlike the SWP, were oriented in their practice toward the struggle for Marxism in the working class and were fighting to construct a revolutionary alternative to the social democracy and its Stalinist accomplices, they were hostile to any political and theoretical compromises with Pabloism.

The contrast between the orientation of the British Trotskyists and that of the SWP was most clearly defined in their very different response to the crisis within the Stalinist movement.

While the SWP's regroupment policy led quickly, in practice, to an abandonment of its independent Trotskyist identity in order to win friends among the broad petty-bourgeois milieu of ex-Stalinists and semi-Stalinists, the British Trotskyists launched a powerful offensive for the ideas of the Fourth International. While seeking the broadest discussion among all those forces, workers and intellectuals,

affected by the Stalinist crisis, Healy's organization did not make unprincipled compromises in order to make itself acceptable. Thus, while the SWP came to view the struggle against Pabloism as an embarrassment and millstone around its neck, the British saw it as the theoretical spearhead of its offensive against Stalinism.

One has only to examine the *Labour Review*, founded in January 1957, to see the vast difference between the work of the British and that of the SWP. In its inaugural issue, *Labour Review* welcomed the intellectual ferment created by the explosion in the Stalinist movement:

From now on, the normal development of Marxist ideas is no longer held up, artificially, by bureaucratic dykes. Millions of workers and intellectuals, in every country, from Russia to the U.S.A., are stepping forward into struggle. They demand to know, because they need to know, the past history of their movement. These young people want to think, to learn, to use their political initiative. Bureaucratic "bans" and "cults" repel them. Our duty is to help them find the answers. *Labour Review* therefore takes issue both with the open Fabian enemies of Marxism and with the Stalinist hacks who have so grievously soiled its reputation.

It will amongst other things be necessary to discuss the Fabian dreams about capitalism enjoying a new lease of life, thanks to Keynes, or to partial nationalisation, or to "new" colonial constitutions, or to the bounty of U.S. imperialism.

Parallel with the discussion of Fabianism we shall deal with the Stalinist variety of "peaceful co-existence" with capitalism and its feeble though repulsive offspring — the British Communist Party's programme, *The British Road to Socialism*. Where did Stalinism come from, and why? Was its rise inevitable? Does the dictatorship of the proletariat really mean an odious and murderous tyranny? Does Democratic Centralism really mean the autocracy of a clique of full-time officials? These are some of the questions we shall try to answer in the coming months.

When we discuss the futility of the Fabian policies, we shall also need to examine the reasons for Hitler's defeat of the German working class, to examine the causes of failure of the French and Spanish Popular Front Governments. We shall try to show the connections between the slogan "Socialism in a Single Country" and these disasters for the

international working class movement and also how it led on to the Moscow Trials, the Stalin-Hitler Pact, the Yalta carve-up of Europe and finally to the mass slaughter of workers and peasants in the satellite countries of Eastern Europe. We shall rescue from the obscurity with which Stalin surrounded the writings of Lenin on the character and future prospects of the Russian Revolution and shall publish some of the works of Trotsky, Lenin's comrade in arms in the Russian Revolution, which have direct relevance to problems of today.

*Labour Review* accordingly invites the collaboration of all serious students of the socialist movement. We shall open our pages widely to them. We count especially on establishing close fraternal relations with the developing Socialist movements of Asia and Africa. *Labour Review* however will be no mere discussion forum. It will be fashioned as a weapon in the struggle against capitalist ideas wherever they find expression in the Labour movement. It will be objective and yet partisan; it will defend the great principles of genuine Communism, as expounded by Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, from both the Fabians and the Stalinists who have consistently misrepresented them.<sup>6</sup>

The first issue of *Labour Review* aroused controversy. Among the criticisms directed against the new magazine was the charge of "sectarianism," by which the critics meant *Labour Review's* clear identification with Trotskyism, although its pages were open to those who represented different political tendencies. In its second issue, *Labour Review* replied in terms that simply could not be found in those publications produced by the SWP during the same period:

To return to this matter of Trotskyism. We appreciate the point of view of many members and ex-members of the Communist Party that whether or not Trotsky gave the best possible scientific explanation of events in the socialist movement during the last thirty years is a matter for debate and discussion. Trotsky and his followers have offered a serious analysis of the recent history of the socialist movement. Their writings represent an attempt, in a period of revolutionary retreat, to continue, after Lenin's death, the Marxist tradition in social science. They have produced a rich body of literature and ideas worthy of serious study by any literate socialist today on the application of Marxist,



scientific methods of analysis to the problems of the international socialist movement.

More than this, the importance of "Trotskyism" for the great debate following the Khrushchev speech, is that it represents the *only* attempt so far made *from the point of view of Marxism* to explain the Stalinist degeneration of the Soviet Union and at estimating the significance of the conflict between the progressive character of nationalized property in the U.S.S.R. and the reactionary character of the bureaucracy which rules that country. Trotskyism is, to date, the only explanation of why the working class in the world needs to defend the U.S.S.R. from imperialist attacks, whilst also helping the Russian workers to get rid of the bureaucracy which autocratically rules them. It was Trotsky who insisted that the bureaucracy would not voluntarily give up its privileges or liberalise itself as a result of mass pressure. He maintained over and over again that it must be overthrown by the revolutionary working class led by a Marxist leadership. Hungary showed how right Trotsky had been on this point. Nor, as far as we can see, have any recent events in the U.S.S.R. itself done anything but confirm the correctness of his analysis.

Likewise the present crisis in the Communist Parties outside the Soviet Union is further proof that the bureaucrats who control these parties, no matter what their difficulties may be as a result of Khrushchev's speech, are absolutely incapable of transforming them into genuine revolutionary parties. These parties, like the Soviet bureaucracy whom they represent, can never adopt revolutionary policies. That is why they are now split into a number of factions each engaged in a bitter struggle with the bureaucrats.

Trotsky's was the only Marxist theory, deriving its inspiration from Lenin, to expose and explain the facts that Khrushchev later revealed — at a time when Communists and false "friends" of the U.S.S.R. were selling their political souls to Stalin. For this reason, Trotsky's theoretical explanation of the phenomenon of Stalinism stands until someone produces a better explanation. For all Marxists today are asking for a more scientific explanation of Stalinism than Khrushchev's "devil cult" or Mao Tse-Tung's eclectic catalogue of "mistakes" and "achievements."

Some people say that there is a danger of involving the British socialist movement in 1967 in a discussion on the

relative merits of one side or another engaged in a sterile, obscure, political controversy, between two sects of the Russian Communist Party conducted in far-away Russia, way back in the 1920s and so diverting our attention from the urgent problems of Britain today. Unfortunately for our native empiricists, the truth is that, one way or another, and whether we like it or not, the future of socialism in any part of the world today is bound up, inextricably, with the Russian Revolution of 1917 and its outcome. We cannot escape its presence however we may try. The "Russian question" remains the key for Marxists who wish to derive a correct theory for the socialist movement in Britain today....

*Labour Review's* aim, in a word, is to *develop* Marxism, not to *revise* it — two different things, as Lenin showed to his generation.<sup>7</sup>

There is one other decisive difference in the manner in which the British and the Americans approached the crisis inside the Stalinist organizations. The regroupment line of the SWP was unconnected to — and, in fact, signified the abandonment of — the development of revolutionary perspectives for the conquest of power by the American working class.

An aspect of this was the SWP's failure to make any objective analysis of the specific and new forms assumed by the crisis of American and world capitalism in the postwar period. Under conditions where, to the untrained eye, the position of capitalism appeared impregnable, Marxists had the responsibility to reveal the contradictions that were building to a renewal of the crisis and a new upsurge of the class struggle.

This theoretical work was all the more necessary to combat those tendencies that were, under the cover of regroupment, working might and main for the repudiation of the SWP's traditional "proletarian orientation," insisting that there existed no serious opportunities for party work outside the middle-class milieu of protest politics.

It is, of course, true that the SWP worked under *relatively* unfavorable conditions. But the material possibilities for overcoming the isolation were developing out of the contradictions of the capitalist system and the struggles of the working

class. This was concretely demonstrated in 1959 with the massive 116-day national steel strike.

The depth of the differences which had arisen between the SWP and the British were revealed in the Americans' response to a conference of the International Committee that was held in Leeds in June 1958. It was attended by Farrell Dobbs, who was in the midst of a lengthy trip through Europe. The conference passed a resolution that summed up the principles upon which the struggle against Pabloism had been based. It emphatically rejected "all conceptions that mass pressure can resolve the question of leadership by forcing reform of the bureaucratic apparatus" in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.<sup>8</sup>

The resolution also advanced a conception of regroupment that was diametrically opposed to that of the SWP, insisting that the revolutionary movement's "regroupment of forces which are moving in a revolutionary direction is coupled with an ideological offensive against Stalinism, social democracy, centrism, trade union bureaucracy and the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois leaderships of national movements in colonial and semi-colonial countries."<sup>9</sup>

When the SWP leadership in New York received this resolution, it instructed Dobbs to break off his European tour and return to the United States. In a letter to Dobbs August 18, 1958, Tom Kerry made no secret of his dissatisfaction with the outcome of the IC conference and Dobbs's participation in it. Accusing Dobbs of acting contrary to the instructions he had been given prior to his departure for Europe, Kerry reminded him, "When we first received the announcement that the IC was calling a congress for June 1958 we interposed the objection that such a project would be too pretentious and not representative of the tasks and perspectives required by the orthodox Trotskyist tendency at this stage of its development."<sup>10</sup>

Kerry argued that the work of the IC should have been limited to a discussion on regroupment, presumably of the liquidationist sort being carried out by the SWP, and reunification with the Pabloites. Instead, Kerry complained bitterly:

What we deduce from the character of the documents [adopted at the Leeds conference] is that they involve a projection of the discussion around the 1953 issues which have been long superseded by events upon which there has been essential political agreement with the one important exception of the nature of the international organization and its function at this stage of development of the world Trotskyist movement.

We thought we had arrived at general agreement that a discussion today involving the issues of 1953 — with the exception, of course, of the “organization question” — would not only be futile, but would be calculated to exacerbate the existing division in the world movement and make a reunification virtually impossible. In light of the struggle for regroupment it appeared to us that such a discussion could only complicate and vitiate the regroupment work, especially in those areas where our tendency directly confronts the organized Pabloite groupings....

Nearly six months have elapsed since your departure. There are undoubtedly many things in your experience since you left the country of which we are completely unaware. At the same time, many things have occurred here which cannot be adequately discussed through the medium of written correspondence....

From the contents of this letter you can perceive that there are obvious misunderstandings and perhaps even some differences on the important question of the tasks and perspectives. What Jim's thoughts are we do not know as we have not heard from him on the matters discussed in this communication.<sup>11</sup>

Kerry's arguments were cynical and self-contradictory. If there existed substantial agreement between the International Committee and the International Secretariat, then why was it so dangerous to discuss the political differences which had arisen in 1953? The anger with which Kerry reacted to the IC resolution meant that he understood very well that the pretense of political “agreement” would be exposed the moment fundamental questions relating to the historical perspectives of the Fourth International were raised with the Pabloites.

In retrospect, the significance of Kerry's cryptic reference to “many things have occurred here which cannot be

adequately discussed through the medium of written correspondence" is fairly obvious. That was the period when the SWP was in the thick of its unprincipled electoral coalition with the middle-class supporters of the "independent socialist" campaign. Undoubtedly, Kerry found it difficult to commit to paper a full description of all the political skulduggery that went on behind the scenes as the SWP maneuvered and junked its Trotskyist heritage.

Dobbs made this letter available to Healy, and in his reply, the latter told Kerry that

it is difficult to see how one can forget about what happened in 1953. Was it all a misunderstanding or were there serious political differences between ourselves and Pablo? You go so far as to suggest that these have been removed, but we think that you are misinformed on this point and have not sufficiently studied the Pablo documents since that time.

No matter how much we may wish to avoid an abstract discussion over 1953, it is impossible to imagine how a discussion on contemporary issues would not give rise, sooner or later, to references to 1953....

The Leeds conference has decided to consolidate the forces of orthodox Trotskyism by preparing a serious discussion on the problems of our movement. What is wrong with this approach? Would this not be a necessary and fundamental part of any principled process of reunification? ... The International Committee will seize upon every opportunity to obtain a principled unification and we feel that the decisions of the Leeds conference should have your wholehearted support. We feel also that the problem of reunification must be recognized as a political problem involving clarification of contemporary perspectives and methods.<sup>12</sup>

On this principled basis, the British Trotskyists assumed the leadership of the struggle to build the Fourth International, now that the SWP leadership was clearly abdicating that responsibility through abject capitulation to revisionism.

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## The Cuban Revolution

The regroupment policy pursued by the SWP between 1957 and 1959 represented a decisive turn away from revolutionary policies based on the mobilization of the working class toward reformist protest politics based on unprincipled alliances with Stalinists, radicals, pacifists and other representatives of the American middle class. It was impossible to disguise the liquidationist character of the regroupment policy after the experience of the 1958 election campaign, and a mood of confusion and disquiet affected a significant section of the SWP. A right-wing tendency within the political committee, represented chiefly by Murray Weiss and supported by Joseph Hansen, pressed for a continuation of the regroupment line. In the draft political resolution prepared in early 1959 for the upcoming Eighteenth National Convention, the political committee glorified the achievements of regroupment and anticipated the organization of yet another broad-based "independent" socialist campaign in 1960.

But on the eve of the convention, Cannon, realizing that the SWP was well on the road to complete liquidation, flew to New York carrying in his pocket a copy of a speech he had already delivered to the Los Angeles local warning against the continuation of regroupment. The secretariat of the political committee held a series of meetings and it was decided to officially call off the regroupment campaign.

A new resolution was hastily drafted and when the convention opened in July 1959, Farrell Dobbs was assigned the task of explaining the sudden shift in the party's

perspectives. The correction was not made in a principled manner. There was no admission that Cannon and the leadership had erred. They simply announced that the regroupment line was no longer valid.

The SWP leadership attempted to give the impression that there had only recently been a swing to the right by the petty-bourgeois forces with which the party had been collaborating since 1957. While reaffirming "the correctness of the three-year regroupment policy," Dobbs declared,

It would now be a mistake to cling to that policy as if nothing had changed. With forces in motion in our direction, as has been the case, a flexible approach implied no contradiction with programmatic firmness. But we must recognize that the trend is now reversing, that the motion is away from revolutionary positions. It would be false to retain in those circumstances a mechanical notion of a flexible approach, because it would imply a trend toward softness on programmatic issues and it would entail a danger of compromising our revolutionary principles.<sup>1</sup>

In order to make the case against regroupment, Dobbs was forced to expose some unpleasant facts about the electoral alliances of the previous year:

In the united electoral campaigns we could put forward only part of our program. In New York, for example, to hold the coalition together in the face of a Communist Party attack, we had to give up the plank on socialist democracy and we had to give up our right to a place on the ticket. Neither of these were concessions in principle but they were serious — a lot to give up. And it should be emphasized that such concessions do not constitute a precedent for any future electoral coalition.

The comrades in Seattle had difficulty with a coalition candidate who insisted on being identified as a liberal and who played a generally disruptive role in their electoral campaign. In view of their experience I am sure they will be the first to agree that, to be acceptable in an electoral coalition, all candidates must be ready to identify themselves with socialism.<sup>2</sup>

Attempting to counteract the effects of the right-wing orientation of the previous three years, the new draft resolution declared that "it would be unrealistic to persist in

our campaign for *organizational* regroupment along previous lines," and reasserted its adherence to the fundamental conceptions of the Fourth International:

Everything that has happened since the outbreak of the crisis of Stalinism has served to confirm the position of Trotskyism as the only genuine revolutionary tendency in our own country and on a world scale. There has been and there is no reason whatever to abandon or modify the basic programmatic positions worked out by our movement and consistently defended in struggle since 1928. Over the past three years the SWP has again shown in practice our willingness to cooperate with socialist-minded individuals and groups of differing political views in specific issues involving civil rights, the labor movement, the Negro struggle and the cause of socialism. The party has exchanged ideas on programmatic questions without raising ultimatic conditions which would have shut off discussion before it could start. Our party intends to continue along this line. But this method of approach, which we first applied in the revolutionary socialist regroupment activities of the 1930's, does not imply and has never implied any intention on our part to build a politically heterogeneous organization at the expense of revolutionary principles without which no effective and enduring revolutionary vanguard party can be created....

We stand against all other tendencies on the basis of Marxist fundamentals. Our aim is to build an independent revolutionary party of the vanguard. We reject all ideas of an all-inclusive substitute for a revolutionary party because "all-inclusive" means reformist and reformist parties can't lead a revolution.<sup>3</sup>

This belated attempt by Cannon to reintroduce orthodoxy into the SWP was bound to fail without the organization of an open struggle against the growth of revisionist tendencies within the party and at the level of the international movement. The crisis within the SWP had developed far beyond the point at which it could be brought under control simply by drafting a resolution and taking a few organizational measures.

Nothing could have saved the SWP from succumbing to the immense class pressures exerted by US imperialism except the resumption of the struggle to reeducate the entire party



in the fundamentals of Trotskyism. This would not have consisted of a few classroom exercises. It would have entailed a direct battle against those forces within the leadership of the SWP and among the ranks who had come to represent the interests of alien class forces. Such a struggle could only have been developed inside the SWP as part of an international fight for revolutionary perspectives. That is, the SWP would have been compelled to reforge its alliance with the International Committee and renew the theoretical and political struggle against Pabloite revisionism. But Cannon realized that such a struggle would in all probability lead to another major split inside the SWP and pulled back, thus delivering a devastating blow to the principles for which he had fought for 30 years. It did not take long for the SWP leadership, despite the ban on regroupment, to find a new political banner around which they could organize the struggle against Trotskyism.

At the Eighteenth Convention, the developments in Cuba had gone largely unmentioned, if not unnoticed. There was as yet no indication that the SWP was about to embrace Castroism as a new revolutionary current that made the conscious struggle for the building of revolutionary Marxist leadership unnecessary. In all its coverage of the Cuban Revolution in the months immediately following the overthrow of Batista on January 1, 1959, the *Militant* had defined Castro as a bourgeois nationalist and adopted a critical stance. In an oblique attack on the Pabloites, Dobbs's report to the Eighteenth Convention ridiculed those who "are much preoccupied with slick solutions of the world crisis short of mass action" and attacked the conception "that science, plus nationalized property, plus bureaucratic reform can resolve the historic social crisis along Stalinist lines." He insisted on "the historically necessary avenue to full workers power, to the full assertion of the power of the working class."<sup>4</sup>

However, within a few months what remained of this perspective within the SWP was to be repudiated. As the Cuban Revolution became the central focus of the party's work, the SWP proclaimed Cuba a workers' state and began glorifying Castroism as a political substitute for the construction of Marxist leadership in the working class.

Despite the official end of regroupment in the summer of 1959, the line of adaptation to petty-bourgeois radicalism was resumed in the spring of 1960 through the SWP's intervention in the Fair Play for Cuba Committee. In a separate study, the International Committee has documented the dubious origins of this organization, which was founded between February and April 1960 with seed money provided by a New Jersey businessman and powerful behind-the-scenes figure in the Democratic Party named Alan Sagner. The Fair Play for Cuba Committee, which is known to have been heavily infiltrated by the FBI and CIA, became the medium through which an extraordinarily large number of students from a single small midwestern college, at which the SWP conducted no political work, entered the party.

These ex-students from Carleton College were, between 1961 and 1966, elevated into leading positions of the SWP and comprise, to this day, its central leadership. There exists no politically credible explanation of this "coincidence" other than that provided by the International Committee: that the Carleton students were infiltrated into the leadership of the SWP as agents of the United States government.

The period which saw the entry of this large group of Carleton students into the party and their rapid promotion into leading positions — Jack Barnes, class of '61, Elizabeth Stone '61, Mary-Alice Waters '63, John Benson '63, Charles Styron '63, Doug Jenness '64, Paul Eidsvik '64, Caroline Lund '66, Barbara Matson '66, Larry Seigle '66, and Cindy Jaquith '69 (The last-named joined the SWP shortly after arriving at Carleton in 1966 and then left the college) — corresponded, according to official government documents, to the period of the maximum government surveillance and infiltration of the SWP. The International Committee has also established, through the sworn testimony of Farrell Dobbs (obtained in the course of the case of *Gelfand v. Attorney General, SWP, et al*) that the aging SWP leader had no knowledge of either Barnes's background or political credentials when the ex-Carletonian replaced him as national secretary.

These issues of *fact* relating to the charges made by the International Committee against the leadership of the SWP have already been dealt with in a series of articles written

by this author in reply to Banda's factionally-motivated denunciation of the *Security and the Fourth International* investigation.<sup>5</sup> Neither Banda nor anyone else has attempted to refute this most recent presentation. The one common characteristic of all the attacks on *Security and the Fourth International* is that they never address the facts that underlie the International Committee's contention that the present leadership of the SWP is massively infiltrated by government agents.

While the International Committee regards its charges against Barnes and his associates as proven, the issue of state penetration of the SWP is a secondary aspect of its political degeneration. The Fair Play for Cuba Committee could only have become a vehicle of state penetration under conditions in which the SWP was in a state of awful political degeneration and rapidly breaking all connections with the program, principles and perspectives of Trotskyism. The Cuban Revolution — though seized upon by Hansen to slander the leadership of the Socialist Labour League and to intensify the atmosphere of poisonous factionalism which facilitated the break with the International Committee — was not simply a fabricated issue. The SWP's uncritical adulation of Castro and its designation of Cuba as a workers' state was bound up with the protracted political degeneration of the party over the previous years. In this sense, the attitude of the SWP toward the Cuban Revolution *was* the consummate programmatic expression of its break with Trotskyism and the whole historically-developed Marxist conception of the socialist revolution.

Putting aside for a moment the issue of Hansen's connections to both the Soviet secret police and the FBI, which have been overwhelmingly documented by the International Committee, his emergence, in the course of the Cuban controversy, as the leading theoretician of the SWP personified its dreadful political decay. Prior to his "discovery" of a workers' state in Cuba, Hansen's political record during the previous decade was consistently right wing.

In 1949-50, during the controversy over Yugoslavia, Hansen rallied to Pablo with the most vulgar and impressionistic arguments. Dismissing the decisive question of the

forms of genuine workers' power, to which Marx, Lenin and Trotsky devoted such great attention, as mere "norms" which are of no decisive importance in evaluating the class nature of a given state, Hansen virtually equated nationalization with the existence of a workers' state. In 1954, he coupled his wrong designation of McCarthyism as a fascist movement with an impermissible concession to bourgeois liberalism. In 1955, after instigating a divisive and unnecessary controversy inside the party over the use of cosmetics by women, he supported the call for the use of federal troops in the South and argued, like a typical petty-bourgeois democrat, that the SWP must become the most ardent champion of bourgeois democracy. In 1958, at the height of the regroupment campaign, Hansen penned an article which amounted to a total repudiation of one of the central programmatic conceptions of the Fourth International: the call for political revolution against the Soviet bureaucracy. These were the credentials of the man who produced in December 1960 the *Draft Theses on the Cuban Revolution*, which proclaimed that Castro had established a workers' state.

Hansen's argument was essentially no different than that which he had advanced a decade earlier in relation to Yugoslavia. For him, it was enough to establish that large-scale expropriations of capitalist property had been effected by Castro to conclude that a workers' state had been established in Cuba. All the complex problems of a historico-theoretical character which had preoccupied the SWP in relation to Yugoslavia and the buffer states were barely addressed by Hansen. The vast political implications, from the standpoint of Marxist theory, of defining Cuba as a workers' state, under conditions in which the leadership of the revolution was clearly of a petty-bourgeois character and where the seizure of power was in no way associated with the existence of any identifiable organs of proletarian power, were brushed aside by Hansen. He ignored the bitter lessons of the 1953 split which had reminded the Fourth International of the wisdom of Trotsky's dictum: behind every sociological definition lies a historical prognosis. Hansen wanted the International Committee to forget how Pablo had exploited the definition of the buffer states and Yugoslavia

as deformed workers' states to credit Stalinism with revolutionary capacities and to thus mount an all-out assault on Marxism and the program of the Fourth International.

As we have already pointed out, the Pabloites not only endowed Stalinism with a revolutionary role, but endorsed without question the domination of the petty bourgeoisie over the anti-imperialist struggles in the backward countries. In every country and under all conditions, the Pabloites turned their backs on the central historical task for which the Fourth International was built: the resolution of the crisis of the revolutionary leadership of the proletariat. Under conditions in which the SWP had given up on the American working class and was far along in its adaptation to the petty bourgeoisie in the United States, it found in Cuba the basis for reunification with the Pabloites.

It is not possible to grasp the fundamental character of the programmatic divisions which led to the 1963 split without an analysis of the Cuban controversy. From the standpoint of program and historic perspective, the class lines dividing the International Committee on the one side and the SWP and the International Secretariat on the other were clearly demarcated on the analysis of the Cuban revolution. But just as Michael Banda makes no analysis of the political process through which the SWP's capitulation to hostile class forces was expressed, he all but ignores the profound significance of the issues raised by its position on Cuba. Banda merely writes: "Another fallacy which must be exposed is the legend that the discussion on Cuba proved the 'orthodox' credentials of the IC." As is typical of Banda's method, he makes no attempt, beyond the assertion itself, to expose this supposed "fallacy."

Hansen's claim that a workers' state had been established in Cuba was not only directed against Trotskyism, as the specific contemporary organizational expression of Marxism, but also against the whole historically-grounded theoretical edifice of scientific socialism as the conscious expression of the revolutionary destiny of the proletariat. If workers' states could be established through the actions of petty-bourgeois guerrilla leaders — based principally on the peasantry, who possessed no significant historical, organizational and polit-

ical connections to the working class, and under conditions in which there existed no identifiable organs of class rule through which the proletariat exercised its dictatorship — there then followed a whole new conception of the historical path to socialism, entirely different from that foreseen by Marxists.

It implicitly rendered anachronistic Marx's writings on the Commune and Lenin's assessment of the universal significance of soviet power as the new form of state power "discovered" by the proletariat, the first nonbourgeois type state. The Marxist preoccupation with the leading role of the proletariat, indeed, the very identification of Marxist parties with the proletariat, was being called into question. The relevance of the strivings of generations of Marxists to organize the proletariat independently of all other classes, including the oppressed peasantry, and to infuse the workers' movement with scientific socialist consciousness was being flagrantly challenged.

The claim that the class character of the Cuban state could be determined simply on the basis of the expropriations and nationalizations carried out by Castro was a fundamental departure from the Marxist theory of proletarian revolution.

But Hansen breezed by these fundamental theoretical issues. His *Draft Theses* dealt summarily with the problem of the forms of state power. Theses 12 and 13 stated:

12. The Cuban government has not yet instituted democratic proletarian forms of power as workers', soldiers', and peasants' councils. However, as it has moved in a socialist direction it has likewise proved itself to be democratic in tendency. It did not hesitate to arm the people and set up a popular militia. It has guaranteed freedom of expression to all groupings that support the revolution. In this respect it stands in welcome contrast to the other noncapitalist states, which have been tainted with Stalinism.

13. If the Cuban revolution were permitted to develop freely, its democratic tendency would undoubtedly lead to the early creation of proletarian democratic forms adapted to Cuba's own needs. One of the strongest reasons for vigorously supporting the revolution, therefore, is to give the maximum possibility for this tendency to operate.<sup>6</sup>

This was not scientific analysis, but wishful thinking. To this day, there do not exist specifically proletarian organs of workers' power and Trotskyism remains a proscribed tendency. Moreover, Castro has loyally supported the suppression of workers' movements outside Cuba, e.g., Czechoslovakia and Poland. There was a crude theoretical error in Hansen's twelfth thesis, which claimed that "democratic proletarian forms of power" is something "instituted" by a government.

This claim had absolutely nothing in common with either the Marxist concept of the state or that of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The soviet, as the specifically proletarian state form, is a mass social phenomena that arises out of the development of the working class at a very advanced stage of the class struggle, overthrows the bourgeoisie and sets itself up as the new state power. Bolshevism did not "invent" Soviet power or "grant" it to the working class. Rather, it conquered state power through the soviet form created by the Russian proletariat, whose class consciousness had been developed through the decades-long struggle of the Marxian socialists.

The soviet as a form of state power which develops organically out of the whole historical development and mass struggles of the working class cannot be equated with those bureaucratically-conceived institutions commonly set up by nationalist leaders in backward countries to stabilize their regimes. Castro's creation of *Poder Popular* ("People's Power"), which did not even come into being until more than a decade after the revolution, is no more a substitute for soviets than the *Jamahiriyas* of Col. Muammar Gaddafi. In a study of Cuba prepared by authors who strongly support Castro and consider Cuba a socialist state, the origins of the *Poder Popular*, created in the mid-1970s, were explained:

After the failure of the ambitious sugar production plan in that year [1970] there was a period of urgent reassessment and a recasting of economic plans and political processes. Basically there seemed to be a choice at that point to go forward by authoritarian and bureaucratic means, with stricter work discipline and material incentives to productivity, as urged by the USSR; or to look for a way to

get higher productivity that relied on moral incentives and greater mobilisation and participation of the mass of the people. The latter is known to have been Fidel Castro's preference.<sup>7</sup>

In an article written in 1960, entitled "Ideology of the Cuban Revolution," Hansen quoted without complaint the views of Che Guevara, who explicitly rejected the concept of proletarian revolution and insisted that the working class movement could not provide the axis of revolutionary struggle in Latin America:

"The third contribution is fundamentally of strategic import and must be a call to attention for those who attempt with dogmatic criteria to center the struggle of the masses in the movements of the cities, completely forgetting the immense participation of those in the countryside in the life of all the underdeveloped countries of the Americas. Not that struggles of the masses of organized workers are to be depreciated, the analysis simply chooses a realistic criterion to estimate the possibilities under the difficult conditions of armed struggle, where the guarantees that customarily adorn our Constitutions are suspended or ignored. Under these conditions, the workers' movements must be clandestine, without arms, in illegality and running enormous dangers; the situation in the open field is not so difficult, the inhabitants supporting the armed guerrillas and in places where the repressive forces cannot reach."<sup>8</sup>

Guevara probably did not realize it — and, neither, we suspect, did Hansen — but his arguments in favor of abandoning the revolutionary organization of the proletariat and centering work on the peasantry were hardly new. Russian Marxism in general and Bolshevism in particular developed in a merciless struggle against all those forces which, insisting on the decisive role of the peasantry, rejected the proletarian foundation of the socialist revolution. Continuing and deepening the work begun by Plekhanov, Lenin subjected to merciless criticism the conceptions of the populists, who subordinated the working class to the peasantry. The political essence of the Social Revolutionary movement was summed up incisively by Lenin as "an attempt on the part of the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia to obscure the



working-class movement = radical, revolutionary petty-bourgeois democracy.<sup>9</sup>

This observation provides the key to understanding the hypnotic attraction of Castroism, Maoism and other forms of left bourgeois nationalism for the modern day petty-bourgeois radical intelligentsia: it serves "to obscure the working-class movement," confuse the democratic and socialist elements of the anti-imperialist movement, and provide left phrases which justify the denial of the leading role of the proletariat and its subordination to the peasantry.

Hansen adapted himself to Guevara's position. "Guevara does not rule out the action of the city proletariat altogether," Hansen noted. "But, since city terrain is the most unfavorable for guerrilla warfare, only limited acts are possible."<sup>10</sup>

Nor did Hansen forthrightly oppose Guevara's declaration that the decisive characteristic of Cuba's agrarian reforms "is the decision to carry it through to the end without favors or concessions to any class."<sup>11</sup> Instead, Hansen resorted to sophistries and cynical equivocations to persuade the SWP that the written and spoken views of Guevara and Castro did not really matter:

Leon Trotsky remarked in 1940, "The life-and-death task of the proletariat now consists not in *interpreting* the world anew but in *remaking* it from top to bottom. In the next epoch we can expect great revolutionists of action but hardly a new Marx."

Cuba, it would seem, has done her share toward verifying this observation. In their pattern of action, the Cuban revolutionaries feel certain that they have pointed the way for all of Latin America. The proof is their own success. But when we seek to determine the exact meaning of their deeds, Marxist clarity is not easily found....

It is quite true that the Cuban revolutionaries do not have any time for spinning fine theories. They are practical people, swamped with tasks. They scarcely have time to look up from the day-and-night schedules they have had to follow since they came to power.<sup>12</sup>

This shameful glorification of intuition and pernicious belittling of the decisive significance of the role of consciousness in the struggle for socialism was, on Hansen's part, consciously directed against the necessity for constructing

sections of the Fourth International based on the strategy of world socialist revolution. His worshipping of spontaneity became a means of ascribing the completion of the programmatic objectives of the Fourth International to leaders who, regardless of their origins or perspective, acted merely under the pressure of objective events. Thus, Hansen turned the crisis of revolutionary leadership into a justification and apology for Castroism and then suggested that Castroism represented the solution of the crisis! It was no longer necessary for the Fourth International to organize and train the proletarian cadre that would defeat the influence of counterrevolutionary Stalinism in the international workers' movement. This task was being accomplished through the sheer strength of objective forces which, working in their own mysterious way, made use of whatever leaderships were at hand to advance the revolution:

Unable to blast away the Stalinist obstacle, the revolution turned back a considerable distance and took a detour. The detour has led us over some very rough ground, including the Sierra Maestra of Cuba, but it is clear that the Stalinist roadblock is now being bypassed.

It is not necessary to turn to Moscow for leadership. This is the main lesson to be drawn from the experience in Cuba.

...

To finally break the hypnosis of Stalinism, it became necessary to crawl on all fours through the jungles of the Sierra Maestra.<sup>13</sup>

This was mysticism, not Marxism. If the break with Stalinism can be accomplished without the theoretical education of working class cadre, simply by a handful of tenacious men crawling on "all fours," then it must be concluded that the entire theoretical and political struggle waged by the Left Opposition and the Fourth International since 1923 was, historically speaking, superfluous. At any rate, Hansen's assessment of the "main lesson" of the Cuban revolution was one which was evidently not understood by Castro himself. It was not too long before the Cuban leader, acting on the basis of national considerations, began to adapt himself to the political line of the Soviet bureaucracy. This

later shift in Cuban policy was immediately defended by Hansen.

The fact that Hansen could even suggest that Castro's victory meant that the "Stalinist roadblock" was being bypassed meant that he considered Cuba exclusively from the standpoint of a national struggle. The struggle against Stalinism is, above all, the fight to actualize the strategy of world revolution through the building of an international party that unites the workers of all countries. This strategy is developed out of the fundamental political and theoretical premise that the building of socialism can only be achieved by the collective and coordinated efforts of the international working class. As Trotsky wrote:

The international character of the socialist revolution, which constitutes the third aspect of the theory of the permanent revolution, flows from the present state of economy and the social structure of humanity. Internationalism is no abstract principle but a theoretical and political reflection of the character of world economy, of the world development of productive forces and the world scale of the class struggle. The socialist revolution begins on national foundations — but it cannot be completed within these foundations. The maintenance of the proletarian revolution within a national framework can only be a provisional state of affairs, even though, as the experience of the Soviet Union shows, one of long duration. In an isolated proletarian dictatorship, the internal and external contradictions grow inevitably along with the successes achieved. If it remains isolated, the proletarian state must finally fall victim to these contradictions. The way out for it lies only in the victory of the proletariat of the advanced countries. Viewed from this standpoint, a national revolution is not a self-contained whole; it is only a link in the international chain. The international revolution constitutes a permanent process, despite temporary declines and ebbs.<sup>14</sup>

## Hansen's Debasement of Marxist Theory

On January 14, 1961, Hansen delivered a report to the SWP Political Committee in support of his *Draft Theses*. If nothing else, his report and the remarks in support of it by other members of the political committee exposed the depths to which the SWP's theoretical level had fallen. Despite the resolution of the Eighteenth Convention, the Cuba policy of the SWP meant the restoration, in a somewhat different form, of the right-wing orientation that had prevailed during the original regroupment campaign. Hansen's explanation of the reasons why the SWP had to immediately declare whether or not it believed Cuba to be a workers' state made very clear that the party leadership was reacting to the pressures being exerted by middle-class and radical public opinion:

There are figures like Sartre, very important intellectual figures that have a position. Is he right or is he wrong? And C. Wright Mills. I am sure all of you have read *Listen, Yankee*. At least all those in this room have read *Listen, Yankee*. All right, is he wrong, or is he right? A big, important figure in the academic world in the United States has made an estimate of the Cuban revolution. We are now faced with a political need to answer where we stand on this. Huberman and Sweezy have taken a stand on it. Do we agree or disagree? The Communist Party has a stand on the character of the revolution. Where do we stand -- do we agree or do we disagree with them?

In other words, we feel a political pressure now to reach a definite decision as to the main characteristics of this

revolution. It finally boils down to this question: Should we intervene in the dispute that's going on among all these currents, all these figures, or should we abstain from this dispute and wait still longer before we take a position? If we do, we suffer political damage. Political necessity forces us to turn to the theoretical side of the revolution.<sup>1</sup>

Without the slightest embarrassment, Hansen was admitting that the SWP's overriding preoccupation with the Cuban events — which were to serve as the justification for its split from the ICFI — was principally motivated by practical considerations stemming from the desire to strengthen its ties with the American radical (and not so radical) middle-class intelligentsia, described by Hansen as “big, important” people!

The vulgar character of Hansen's thinking was exemplified in the manner he set about convincing the SWP Political Committee of the proletarian character of the Cuban state. His exposition reads almost like a satire on the pragmatic method, which constructs generalizations out of facts drawn from casual observation:

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. 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. That's the situation.<sup>2</sup>

These “facts,” as presented by Hansen, were devoid of critical analysis. As the International Committee was later to explain, Hansen's treatment of “facts” as some sort of independent arbiter of truth was that of an unabashed pragmatist. He did not bother to examine the nature of the analytical concepts which he employed, consciously and unconsciously, in the very process of abstracting his “facts.” To say that capitalists have been expropriated did not in itself explain the class nature of the expropriations. The reference to the starting of a planned economy was no less abstract, inasmuch as it did not analyze the basis and perspective of Castro's “planning.” And history has since demonstrated

that in the absence of systematic industrialization and without the liberation of Cuba from the domination of a monoculture economy based on sugar cane, scientific planning has been impossible.

But the most abstract of all Hansen's claims was his reference to "a qualitatively different kind of state." Different from what? Hansen did not say. His statement was simply to be taken at face value. Of course, the majority of the SWP Political Committee had some idea of what Hansen was referring to. The pictorial image of armed guerrillas probably flashed through their minds as they listened to Hansen. That was, no doubt, very different from the appearance of the New York Police Department. But armed guerrillas and popular militias do not, by themselves, determine the class nature of the state power and prove the existence of a nonbourgeois type state. The emergence of such bodies in the course of popular democratic revolutions is by no means uncommon. What made the state which arose from the Bolshevik revolution "qualitatively different" was not armed militias, but the Soviet form through which the proletariat exercised its power.

Thus, the "facts" which Hansen declared to be the starting point of his analysis were based on unstated conceptual premises (of a petty-bourgeois, non-Marxist character), unwarranted assumptions and undigested impressions.

Hansen's presentation went from bad to worse. Arguing like a cynical lawyer trying to work out a deal — a mode of exposition that was Hansen's specialty — he reviewed the "facts" upon which all reasonable men and women in the SWP leadership could agree:

I don't want to repeat what's in the theses you have before you because I expect everybody will have read and studied them. But what I would like to place before you are some considerations, some of which I am sure you will agree with, others which you may or may not agree with, and some considerations that I present as personal opinions. So first of all, let me indicate where I think you will all agree on the question of Cuba before I come to the speculative side, if it is speculative. It is very important in beginning a discussion to understand what we agree on. It makes the discussion a

lot easier. This is true whatever the nuances may be in all the various positions that are taken.

The first fact I think we can all agree on is this: That the revolution began under a petty-bourgeois leadership, whose program was largely bourgeois democratic. That's one of the things I think everyone will agree with, one reason being that the leadership itself recognizes that. The Castro leadership says that. Now there are two special things about this leadership. One is that it was extremely radical. It believed in armed revolution. They practiced it, they advocated it. And let me add that it's completely legal in Cuba. I don't say it's legal here, but in Cuba it's legal to advocate the armed overthrow of the government.

This leadership had one more characteristic that I think everyone will agree with. Its first appeals were directed to the population at large — workers, peasants, everybody — in the expectation that there would be a spontaneous uprising in response, some actions that would dramatize the appeals. Then after they found that this did not work, they set about organizing an armed force consisting largely of the peasantry and of agricultural workers. I think those are facts that are so clear that no one would deny them. Certainly in our movement everyone will agree with them. I think we also have agreement among all of us that this is an extremely profound revolution, one that has gone to far-reaching economic and social measures. Everybody will agree on that, even though they won't agree on what to call them. I think everyone will agree that the revolution began with the support of the peasantry and of the agricultural workers, that it had the sympathy or quickly won the sympathy of the urban workers and finally their active support. That's the present stage of the revolution, and I think everybody else who has been there and studied there will agree on that point.

Finally, I think everybody will agree that the Cuban revolution has displayed strong democratic and socialist tendencies. It's much more democratic than anything we've seen in a long time.

That's where we have agreement so far as the main facts are concerned.

I think we will also have agreement on what our main tasks are in respect to the Cuban revolution, and that's of key importance for our party. Also for the discussion we

want to have, an agreement on that score is of key importance.

The first main task is to defend this revolution against imperialism. That's our main preoccupation as a party in relationship to the Cuban revolution.

I think we have agreement that we should defend all institutions that have been created in Cuba, like the planned economy, the expropriation of the bourgeoisie — that we defend these revolutionary institutions against the counterrevolution. That's a big area of agreement.

I think we all agree that we should do our utmost to rally the American labor movement to the Cuban revolution and rally the students and intellectuals, whoever we can get together to defend that revolution. And I think we agree on certain tasks inside Cuba no matter how we name these various things that occurred there. First, that we follow a policy aimed at expanding and developing the proletarian democracy. That's our Number One. Second, that we follow a policy aimed at building a revolutionary socialist party. In other words, that we follow a policy of deepening, extending the socialist consciousness which has already begun in Cuba. And that we follow a policy aimed at extending the Cuban revolution throughout Latin America. We all agree on that no matter what we call these different things. And thus we have a very wide area of agreement.

I want to stress that again and again — the wide area of agreement that we have. I do that because in a discussion, there's a natural tendency to emphasize differences, emphasize even nuances that appear much larger than they really are. The fact is that our areas of agreement are so wide, so solid that we can afford to take things fairly easy on the other side.<sup>3</sup>

As we noted before, Hansen's assertions were heavily freighted with unstated theoretical premises in which were concealed his own petty-bourgeois outlook. For example, he cited as a "big area of agreement" the defense of "all institutions that have been created in Cuba," without analyzing the class relations within Cuba upon which these institutions rested. Without first establishing that these institutions represented the proletariat in power, Hansen provided them with open-ended support. At the same time, the defense of these institutions was simply equated with the



defense of Cuba against American imperialism, as if a critical attitude toward the Castro regime was incompatible with the defense of the Cuban revolution against the United States. Hansen's statement that the defense of the Cuban revolution was "our main preoccupation as a party in relation to the Cuban revolution" was a claim that Trotskyists would not even make in relation to the USSR. The defense of any revolution, even that which places the proletariat in power, is a tactic of the Marxist party, subordinated to its strategy of world socialist revolution. Moreover, Hansen's assertion did not settle a whole host of associated political questions: Upon what perspective and program did the SWP undertake to organize the defense of the Cuban revolution? Upon what class forces did the SWP intend to base that defense?

It should, of course, be stressed that the *unconditional* defense of the Cuban revolution against the threat of US intervention did not require the definition of Cuba as a workers' state. For Trotskyists, the anti-imperialist and democratic national character of the Cuban people's struggle, under the leadership of Castro, was sufficient to require tireless activity in defense of the Cuban revolution. But from the unconditional defense of Cuba it did not at all follow that Marxists were compelled to proclaim the existence of a workers' state on the island. Hansen sought continuously to blur the distinction between these two separate questions.

As for Hansen's claim that the SWP was devoted to the building of a revolutionary socialist party in Cuba, this goal was already being trimmed to suit the needs of adapting to Castroism. Echoing the Pabloites, Hansen advanced the position that Trotskyism was nothing more than a tendency which would play a role in the creation of a future world party. The Fourth International, he suggested, could not claim to be the world party of socialist revolution:

Now let me say right now that such a party has never been built yet. Marx didn't build one. Lenin didn't build one. They started the core of it. Their aim was absolutely clear — where they were headed. But they never conceived this party as simply a narrow, national party. They conceived it as an international one, one that is capable of

the greatest task that has faced humanity, taking us from capitalism to socialism.

When we say that capitalism is rotten-ripe for revolution, we also say that the conditions on an international scale are rotten-ripe for the construction of such a party, a tremendous international party that has all the knowledge and capacity, both political and theoretical, for accomplishing these great tasks. How are we going to build such a party? Will it be built in advance of the revolution? It would be very good if it could be — at least that's what the Cubans themselves say now — it would be good to have such a party in advance. The fact is that such a party has got to be built in the very process of revolution as revolutions occur with varying degrees of success. That's the fact that faces us. In some countries I think we will be able to build national sections of the party before the revolution occurs, and in some countries, like ours, I think that is an absolute condition for success. In other countries the revolution forges forward faster than the party. That's an evident fact of politics now.<sup>4</sup>

Hansen specialized in twisting historical truth in order to create ludicrous premises that he could then knock down like straw men. Neither Marx nor Lenin were builders of "narrow, national" parties. Their political energies were centered precisely on the construction of international working-class parties. To claim, as Hansen did, that they did not build such parties is to deny the historical fact of the First, Second and Third Internationals.

The purpose of Hansen's "twist" was to argue a case for an entirely different type of international party than that built by Lenin and Trotsky. For Marxists, an international party is based on a common world program. The cadre of an international party are recruited and trained on the basis of this program, which is the expression of the objective interests of the world proletariat. The building of this programmatically unified world party is the fundamental and urgent task that confronts Marxists in all countries, regardless of the political conjuncture that exists in any one country. To the extent that this task is postponed in any country until the eruption of revolutionary struggles, the development of

the revolution along a conscious proletarian course directed toward the conquest of state power is seriously endangered.

Hansen was really talking about the creation of a multi-class, politically heterogeneous "world" organization, in which Trotskyists would adapt themselves to non-Marxist and nonproletarian forces: a farcical parody of Stalin's "workers' and peasants'" international. The claim that it is necessary to build revolutionary parties in some countries prior to the outbreak of revolution as an "absolute condition" for their success, but perhaps not necessary in other countries is to break completely with Marxism. Hansen was repeating virtually word for word the arguments of Pablo, who had justified capitulation to Stalinism and bourgeois nationalism on the ground that there was not time to build an independent Trotskyist organization. The logical outcome of this perspective, conjunctural liquidationism, had to be, and was, the abandonment of the struggle to build Trotskyist parties anywhere in the world, especially in the United States!

The fact that Hansen's position was overwhelmingly supported in the leadership of the SWP showed the extent to which the party had retreated from the positions it had defended in the struggle against Pabloism a decade earlier. The older generation of party leaders had given up on the American working class and saw no prospects for the SWP. The mood of capitulation which now gripped the old Cannonites was clearly expressed in the arguments of Morris Stein in the national committee discussion that followed Hansen's report:

Now as we discuss the facts, I think that fact Number One in the Cuban revolution — if you want to know how was all this possible — fact Number One is the existing world reality. Without it you could have had no Cuban revolution. The facts of the life and death struggle between two social systems, that dominates the whole of life throughout the world. Could you for a moment envisage a Cuban revolution prior to, say, the 1917 Russian Revolution? ...

So there's a new world reality that we are dealing with today. And that world reality is the 1917 Revolution plus the war and what resulted from it. Namely, the revolutions in Yugoslavia, in China, in the Eastern European countries;

the growth in power of the Soviet Union — it's no longer an isolated workers state fighting for its life; it's a powerful state, the second greatest power in the world. And by the force of circumstance — not the least of which is the Chinese revolution — the Soviet Union is compelled today, instead of playing a counterrevolutionary role — *it's compelled, out of self-defense of interest, say what you may, to place itself on the side of revolution.*

This is the new element in the world situation today without which you cannot begin to understand what went on.<sup>5</sup>

Just 10 years earlier, Stein had played a prominent role in the fight against Pablo, subjecting his liquidationist views to a merciless critique. He had specifically denounced Pablo's attempt to endow Stalinism with a revolutionary role in the international class struggle. Stein had rejected the idea that the basic historic tasks of the Fourth International could be resolved simply through the growth of "objective factors" favorable to revolution. Replying to Pablo's talk of "engulfing revolutionary waves," Stein had warned that "there isn't a single capitalist country in which we can truthfully say that the crisis of proletarian leadership has been fully resolved" and went on to point out:

The inflated optimism about the revolutionary wave which is spreading from country to country and continent to continent, is this a cover for deep pessimism about the capabilities of the working class and the revolutionary vanguard. The sum total of this line can only be liquidationism. Why bother building a party when everything is becoming resolved — or will be resolved eventually — by a mounting revolutionary wave. Why be interested in trade union activity or have patience with backward workers when everything is ablaze with revolution. Why study Marxist classics when they do not apply to the new epoch?<sup>6</sup>

By 1961, Stein had forgotten all that he had once believed. He now argued with a shameless disdain for Marxist theory:

Now to become sidetracked to a discussion which places primary weight on the question of the leadership in Cuba, on the question of its petty-bourgeois nature and its origin, its empiricism, you're battering down open doors here, because we all accept that.

But I think we should add a little more than that, namely, that you're dealing with a group of young people, very young, as far as leaders in the world today go, and I don't mean only young compared to Adenauer. Men in their early thirties....

They're all in their early thirties.

Point Number Two: They are very brave men, selfless men, fighters. They've proved themselves in that respect. They are sincere. They started out with a sincere desire to rid their country of Batistaism and American imperialism. That's a big undertaking.

In the given conjuncture of world circumstances, and being empiricists, they adapt themselves. And there's very little room for adaptation. Either you are on the side of American imperialism or you accept the aid of the Soviet Union and the Soviet-bloc countries.<sup>7</sup>

Stein no longer believed that the alternative was a conscious strategy based on the perspective of world socialist revolution. The Fourth International, as far as Stein was concerned, had no independent program to offer the masses of Cuba. The underlying loss of confidence in the viability of Trotskyism and its long-term perspectives was revealed by Stein when he blurted out, "So what you have is a most peculiar phenomenon for us. We spend the best part of our lives polemicizing against people who talked like revolutionists and acted like reformists. We have spent our life on it. I think we should welcome a change."<sup>8</sup>

This speech was Stein's swan song. Though still in his fifties, Stein was politically exhausted after 30 years in the revolutionary movement. His capitulation to Castroism was both a political and psychological preparation for a demoralized retirement. Abandoning all practical activity, Stein and his wife, Sylvia Bleeker, drifted into the shadows, never formally quitting the party but severing all active connections with its daily work. Stein's own prediction was fulfilled: what need was there for old Trotskyists when young men like Castro were enjoying success without all the theoretical baggage of the Fourth International?

The adulation of Castroism was a political expression of the SWP's rejection of a revolutionary perspective for the American working class. That is why the SWP's position on

Cuba went hand in hand with its complete liquidation into the middle-class protest politics in the United States.

A key to understanding the collapse of the SWP as a revolutionary party is to be found in an analysis made by Cannon himself of the decay of the American Communist Party.

He had written in 1954,

The degeneration of the Communist Party began when it abandoned the perspective of revolution in this country, and converted itself into a pressure group and cheering squad for the Stalinist bureaucracy in Russia — which it mistakenly took to be the custodian of a revolution “in another country”....

What happened to the Communist Party would happen without fail to any other party, including our own, if it should abandon its struggle for a social revolution in this country, as the realistic perspective of our epoch, and degrade itself to the role of sympathizer of revolutions in other countries.

I firmly believe that American revolutionists should indeed sympathize with revolutions in other lands, and try to help them in every way they can. But the best way to do that is to build a party with a confident perspective of a revolution in this country.

Without that perspective, a Communist or Socialist party belies its name. It ceases to be a help and becomes a hindrance to the revolutionary workers' cause in its own country. And its sympathy for other revolutions isn't worth much either.<sup>9</sup>

In 1939-40, during the battle inside the SWP over the class nature of the Soviet state, Trotsky taunted the Burnham-Shachtman minority to explicitly state what strategic and programmatic conclusions were to be drawn from their proposed finding that the Soviet Union was no longer to be considered a workers' state. In this way, he made clear that the struggle was not simply a dispute over terminology. The minority's rejection of the Fourth International's designation of the USSR as a workers' state was inextricably connected to profound differences with Trotskyism on all fundamental questions.

Similarly, the question of Cuba was not merely a difference over terminology. Hansen sought to evade the formulation of a principled explanation of the implications, both for Marxist theory and the program of the Fourth International, of the definition of Cuba as a workers' state. He refused to state precisely what conclusions the Trotskyist movement ought to draw from the alleged formation of a workers' state under the petty-bourgeois non-Marxist leadership of Castro. Hansen attempted to cover the liquidationist essence of the SWP's position with fatuous claims that Castro's victory "has given fresh confirmation to the correctness of the theory of permanent revolution" — a position which has since been repudiated by his Carleton College proteges in the present-day leadership of the SWP, who now admit quite openly that the American party's line on Castro was, in fact, a repudiation of the theory of permanent revolution.

The struggle taken up by the International Committee, at the initiative of its British section, the Socialist Labour League, against the SWP's decision to reunify with the Pabloite International Secretariat on the basis of a common platform of capitulation to Castroism represented a crucial milestone in the development of the Fourth International. In opposing the SWP's betrayal of its past stand against Pabloism, the SLL assumed responsibility for the defense of the whole political and theoretical heritage of Trotskyism and through this fight reforged the foundation for the building of the Fourth International.

## The SLL Defends the International Committee

Banda has virtually nothing to say about the political content of the struggle waged by the International Committee against the reunification of the Socialist Workers Party and the Pabloite International Secretariat. His reference to this decisive episode in the history of the Fourth International is confined to the following two paragraphs:

Another fallacy which must be exposed is the legend that the discussion on Cuba proved the "orthodox" credentials of the IC. If this were so then indeed one would not have the crisis of today. Indubitably some important contributions on the method of pragmatism, the theory of knowledge and dialectics as well as the question of base and superstructure, etc., were made in the controversy with the SWP. But this did not alter the framework of the discussion which was entirely suspect.

Healy made no contribution at all to this struggle. The theoretical work was done entirely by Cdes. Slaughter, Banda and Kemp.

Because Banda now opposes Trotskyism, he rejects the political legitimacy of the struggle waged in the early 1960s by the Socialist Labour League in defense of the programmatic heritage of the Fourth International. The "framework" of the 1961-63 struggle against the unprincipled reunification was the legacy of Cannon's 1953 "Open Letter" and the establishment of the International Committee in opposition to Pabloite revisionism. The task of defending the principles



articulated by Cannon in the formation of the ICFI fell to the British section under conditions in which the SWP, whose political weaknesses in the aftermath of 1953 had prevented it from developing the struggle against opportunism, had gone over to the liquidationist perspective of the Pabloites.

Regardless of the magnitude of Healy's personal contribution to the 1961-63 struggle, which was hardly as minimal as Banda claims two decades later, the documents submitted by the British Trotskyists represented a politically decisive contribution to the theoretical development of the Fourth International. The present betrayals of Healy, Banda and Slaughter do not cancel out their past achievements. In fact, Banda has it completely wrong: the crisis which shattered the WRP in 1985-86 was the outcome of the rejection by Banda, Healy and Slaughter of the principles which they had defended in 1961-63.

Banda's procedure in relation to the struggle against reunification is the same that he employed in relation to the "Open Letter" of 1953. Rather than dealing with the actual content of the fight waged by the ICFI, he finds a subjective criterion for denouncing it. In the case of the "Open Letter," he attacked it as an "undignified manoeuvre." In attempting to dismiss the fight against reunification, he denounces the suspect framework of the discussion. ~~But~~ he refuses to say precisely what it is that he opposed. He never even states whether or not he now rejects the position adopted in relation to Cuba. Nor does Banda state whether the ICFI was wrong in rejecting reunification. And, as always, he never even attempts to analyze the class forces expressed in the opposed positions.

The significance of the struggle waged by the Socialist Labour League between 1961-63 is that it established the unbridgeable class gulf between Trotskyism and Pabloism. It demonstrated that Pabloism was not simply, as the SWP claimed, a term denoting false organizational practices, excessive centralism, etc. Rather, in the course of an exhaustive analysis of the political evolution of Pabloism, the SLL demonstrated that it is an expression of the pressure of imperialism upon the revolutionary vanguard, a petty-bourgeois opportunist trend that is irreconcilably hostile to

the programmatic foundations and revolutionary tasks of the Fourth International. It proved that the reunification proposed by the SWP, if unopposed, would lead inexorably to the political liquidation of the Trotskyist movement, in the sense of transforming it into an appendage of Stalinism, social democracy and bourgeois nationalism. From this standpoint, the SLL explained that Cuba was an aspect of the discussion, but not its essence. The question of defining the class nature of the Cuban state could be tackled only in relation to the elaboration of the historical perspective of the Fourth International.

In opposing reunification with the Pabloites without prior joint discussion of the significance of the 1953 split for the world perspectives of the Fourth International and in rejecting the characterization of Cuba as a workers' state, the Socialist Labour League defended: (1) the Leninist theory of the party as the vanguard of the working class and the essential weapon for the organization of the proletarian revolution; (2) the theory of permanent revolution, which establishes the hegemony of the working class in the anti-imperialist and democratic struggles of the backward countries and its complete independence from the organizations of the bourgeois nationalists; (3) the Fourth International as the world party of socialist revolution; (4) dialectical and historical materialism as the theoretical foundation of the revolutionary program of Marxism.

These four aspects were component elements of a theoretically-unified defense of the political heritage of Trotskyism. It should be especially stressed that the ability of the SLL to extend the struggle against Pabloite revisionism to the level of its underlying idealist methodology, and to show that its attack on the program of the Fourth International was inseparably linked with its anti-dialectical objectivism, marked a decisive gain for the Fourth International, a renewal of the line of struggle developed by Trotsky in the crucial battle against Burnham and Shachtman in 1939-40. This, too, is an achievement that retains its validity, despite Healy's later abuse and distortion of the dialectical method.

The SLL initiated the struggle against the SWP's turn toward reunification with a letter from its national commit-

tee, January 2, 1961, to the national committee of the SWP. In this first document, the significance of Pabloism was correctly explained:

The greatest danger confronting the revolutionary movement is liquidationism, flowing from a capitulation either to the strength of imperialism or of the bureaucratic apparatuses in the Labour movement, or both. Pabloism represents, even more clearly now than in 1953, this liquidationist tendency in the international Marxist movement. In Pabloism the advanced working class is no longer the vanguard of history, the centre of all Marxist theory and strategy in the epoch of imperialism, but the plaything of "world-historical factors," surveyed and assessed in abstract fashion.... Here all historical responsibility of the revolutionary movement is denied, all is subordinated to panoramic forces; the questions of the role of the Soviet bureaucracy and of the class forces in the colonial revolution are left unresolved. That is natural, because the key to these problems is the role of the working class in the advanced countries and the crisis of leadership in their Labour movements....

Any retreat from the strategy of political independence of the working class and the construction of revolutionary parties will take on the significance of a world-historical blunder on the part of the Trotskyist movement....

It is because of the magnitude of the opportunities opening up before Trotskyism, and therefore the necessity for political and theoretical clarity, that we urgently require a drawing of the lines against revisionism in all its forms. *It is time to draw to a close the period in which Pabloite revisionism was regarded as a trend within Trotskyism.* Unless this is done we cannot prepare for the revolutionary struggles now beginning. We want the SWP to go forward with us in this spirit. <sup>1</sup>

While not rejecting the possibility of unification with the International Secretariat, the SLL insisted that no political concessions could be made to the Pabloite outlook and that organizational steps had to be preceded by the elaboration of world perspectives and the most searching analysis of the evolution of Pabloism:

What is needed in the international movement today is a political statement by the orthodox Trotskyists of where

we stand on the great problems of the day. Without this international political declaration, it will be impossible to rebuild the international movement. This can be clearly seen from the crisis which exists in Ceylon and in our own movement in the Argentine. The development of a most promising movement in Japan can only be continued on the basis of such an international reaffirmation of principles....

This international document must be followed up by a series of articles analysing the revisionist course of Pabloism. It is a vital pre-condition for the development of the Fourth International that we break finally from all traces of such revisionism. If we do not make this break now, then our movement will, in the opinion of the SLL, suffer its most severe crisis in a period of its greatest opportunity.<sup>2</sup>

On May 8, 1961 the Socialist Labour League sent another document to the SWP which dealt explicitly with the drift of the American movement toward positions which were clearly of a Pabloite character, and thus contradicting the SWP's claims that the split of 1953 was no longer of any consequence to the Trotskyist movement. The SLL took sharp exception to the claim made by Morris Stein that Stalinism was capable of playing a revolutionary role in aiding the anti-imperialist struggle, and expressed its apprehension that the positions taken by some SWP members at the January 14, 1961 meeting of the national committee

indicates a retreat from the position taken up against the Pabloites. The essence of the Pabloite method was to begin from a so-called "objective," in fact a purely contemplative, standpoint and weigh up the "objective forces" (or "world reality") — and then draw superficial and purely adaptive conclusions from this. What difference is there between Comrade Stein's remarks above [quoted in Chapter 27] and the Pabloite revisionist theory of the Stalinist parties "projecting a revolutionary orientation"?<sup>3</sup>

The SLL then focussed on a critical area of dispute with the Pabloites: their subordination of the proletariat to the national bourgeoisie in the backward countries:

An essential of revolutionary Marxism in this epoch is the theory that the national bourgeoisie in under-developed countries is incapable of defeating imperialism and estab-

lishing an independent national state. This class has ties with imperialism and it is of course incapable of an independent capitalist development, for it is part of the capitalist world market and cannot compete with the products of the advanced countries. In national liberation movements the workers' organizations must follow Lenin's slogan: "March separately, strike together" against the foreign imperialists and their immediate collaborators. Following Marx, we say: support the bourgeois and petit-bourgeois parties insofar as they help strike common blows against our enemy; *oppose* them on every issue in which they want to stabilize their own conditions of existence and their own rule.

While it is true that the stage of "independence" reached by countries like Ghana, and the national independence movements led men like Mboya of Kenya, acts as a stimulant to national liberation movements in other countries, the fact remains that Nkrumah, Mboya, Nasser, Kassem, Nehru, Soekarno, and their like, represent the national bourgeoisie of their own countries. The dominant imperialist policy-makers both in the USA and Britain recognize full well that only by handing over political "independence" to leaders of this kind, or accepting their victory over feudal elements like Farouk and Nuries-Said, can the stakes of international capital and the strategic alliances be preserved in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

Comrade Hansen's article on the Mexico conference fails, in our opinion, to take a principled stand on the character of such states. It is not the job of Trotskyists to boost the role of such nationalist leaders. They can command the support of the masses *only* because of the betrayal of leadership by Social-Democracy and particularly Stalinism, and in this way they become buffers between imperialism and the mass of workers and peasants. The possibility of economic aid from the Soviet Union often enables them to strike a harder bargain with the imperialists, even enables more radical elements among the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois leaders to attack imperialist holdings and gain further support from the masses. But, for us, in every case the vital question is one of the working class in these countries gaining political independence through a Marxist party, leading the poor peasantry to the building of Soviets, and recognizing the necessary connections with the international socialist revolution. In no case, in our opinion, should

Trotskyists substitute for that the hope that the nationalist leadership should become socialists. The emancipation of the working class is the task of the workers themselves. Much of the current discussion on Cuba, it seems, proceeds in this way: The Cuban masses support Castro; Castro began as a petit-bourgeois but has become a socialist; the public pressure of imperialist attack and of popular struggle may turn him into a Marxist, and already the tasks confronting him in defending the gains of the revolution have brought him "naturally" to positions indistinguishable from Trotskyism. In this approach, the fundamentals of Marxism are trampled upon. Even if Castro and his cadre were "converted" would that make the revolution a proletarian revolution? Have we forgotten Lenin's strictures in April and May of 1917 on the need to campaign, *explain*, and *organize* the *majority* of the working class to take power through the Soviets? If the Bolsheviks could not lead the revolution without a conscious working-class support, can Castro do this? Quite apart from this, we have to evaluate political tendencies on a class basis, on the way they develop in struggle in relation to the movement of classes over long periods. A proletarian party, let alone a proletarian revolution, will not be born in any backward country by the conversion of petit-bourgeois nationalists who stumble "naturally" or "accidentally" upon the importance of workers and peasants.<sup>4</sup>

The SLL emphatically rejected the claim that Castro's petty-bourgeois July 26 Movement could serve as a surrogate for the independent mobilization of the Cuban working class:

There is no road to working-class power except the smashing of the bourgeois state and the workers' own organs — Soviets, workers' councils, etc. — controlling the national life. This is true in the advanced countries and in the colonial countries. This is the task not only in the USA but also in Cuba. Some comrades in the SWP NC discussion have criticized the approach of the Latin American comrades who advocated in their resolution the correct policy of workers' and peasants' councils, arming the workers, and so on. These criticisms suggested, for instance, that such a campaign would be seen as counter-revolutionary by the Cuban masses and by the Castro leadership. Once again, all Marxist method and all revolutionary experience are overthrown by this approach.

If these comrades stop and think, surely they must agree that in a revolutionary period such as that in Cuba today, it is precisely a question of finding methods of the working class solving the problems of internal and external defence and of the economic life of the country. The tactics of a revolutionary party will be to present the road to workers' power in terms of methods of solving these problems *in a class way*. Once again, Lenin's leadership of the Bolshevik party in the period of dual power is exemplary in this respect....

Comrade Hansen's general remarks on the question of the Party are most disarming: It is a question, you see, of the *world* party, whose growth is manifest all over the world as imperialism is rolled back. It is suggested that *in places* this process of emancipation of the working class will be achieved *without* such a party. Cuba is presumably one of these places. We have the awkward phenomenon, in Comrade Hansen's presentation, of "socialist consciousness beginning to appear" *after* the setting up of a workers' state! In our opinion, the discussion of the Party at this abstract, "international" level is an evasion which avoids the *concrete* question of building such parties *in each country*.<sup>5</sup>

At a meeting of the International Committee held on July 28-29, 1961, Cliff Slaughter analyzed the SWP's perspectives resolution, concentrating on its basic departure from the Marxist method:

The fundamental weakness of the SWP resolution is its substitution of "objectivism," i.e., a false objectivity, for the Marxist method. This approach leads to similar conclusions to those of the Pabloites. From his analysis of imperialism as the final stage of capitalism, Lenin concluded that the conscious revolutionary role of the working class and its party was all-important. The protagonists of "objectivism" conclude, however, that the strength of the "objective factors" is so great that, *regardless* of the attainment of Marxist leadership of the proletariat in its struggle, the working-class revolution will be achieved, the power of the capitalists overthrown. It is difficult to attach any other meaning than this to the SWP resolution's formulations about the "impatience" of the masses who cannot delay the revolution until the construction of a Marxist leadership. This means that the *existing* leaderships of the anti-

imperialist forces will be forced "by the logic of the revolution itself" to undertake the revolutionary leadership of the proletarian struggle for power. The SWP has not fully developed this theory, but in its attitude to Cuba it accepts exactly these conclusions. In the early 1950s the basis of the Pabloite notion that the Communist Parties and the Soviet bureaucracy would "project a revolutionary orientation" followed from precisely this approach. A Marxist analysis must insist on this deviation in the SWP Resolution being thought through to the end. If the petty-bourgeois leadership in Cuba has been forced by the objective logic of events to lead the proletariat to power (the SWP says Cuba is a "workers' state," which can only mean the dictatorship of the proletariat) then we must demand an analysis of the present world situation which shows how this type of event has become possible, so that the Leninist theory of the relation between class, party and power, must be discarded.

Similarly with the formulation in the SWP resolution about the construction of the revolutionary party *in the course of the revolution itself*. Again the implications of the formula must be thought through to the end. For us, such formulae only have meaning under the aspect of the general historical perspective of class relations. The SWP must show in what way "objective factors" in the world situation make it *unnecessary* in some cases to prepare and construct a revolutionary leadership. The construction of such parties through periods of the blackest reaction, as well as in preparatory and pre-revolutionary periods, is the great historical work of Lenin and his followers. Even if Lenin and Trotsky were not wrong in *their* time to *prepare* such parties, does the SWP consider that in *our* time definite objective forces have ensured that there will be time enough for the construction of revolutionary parties *in the course of the revolution itself*? If so, they must describe to us exactly the qualitative change from the epoch of imperialism in which Lenin and Trotsky worked to our own era. If not, they must presumably return to the Leninist position on this question.<sup>6</sup>

Pounding away at the disorienting objectivism of the SWP's perspectives, Slaughter denounced as "reactionary twaddle" the claim that the actions of petty-bourgeois nationalists are "confirmations" of the theory of permanent revolution: "This amounts to one of two things (or possibly both): (a) It absolves



people who call themselves Trotskyists from "confirming" precisely in practice, on the arena of working class struggle, the theory of Permanent Revolution; and (b) it covers up a capitulation to the new opportunists and their role with fine talk about about confirming the theories of Trotsky." <sup>7</sup>

As the polemic developed, it became clear that the SWP was rejecting the necessity of constructing revolutionary parties of the proletariat in the backward countries. Extending its analysis of Cuba to the developments in Algeria, the SWP offered uncritical support to Ben Bella and denounced the SLL for opposing the independence agreement worked out between the FLN and French imperialism at Evian in 1962. According to the SWP leadership:

This judgment is utterly false. The agreement wrested from de Gaulle against OAS resistance is a major victory for the Algerian people, for the Arab and colonial revolution. It is a jolting setback to French and world imperialism. Of course, it is far from a complete and final victory. But it lifts the struggle for national independence and social liberation in that country to a higher stage and places the revolution upon firmer and more favourable grounds for the solution of its next tasks....

Between them Cuba and Algeria encompass most of the basic problems confronting Marxists in the present stage of the colonial revolution. The disorientation displayed by the SLL in regard to these two revolutions flows from their wrong method of approach to the fundamental processes at work. The root cause of the errors in both cases is the same: a loss of Marxist objectivity, disregard and depreciation of all other factors in the situation but the character of the official leadership. The subjective method of analysis results in oversimplified and sectarian conclusions.<sup>8</sup>

Curiously, while Banda is very vocal about the mistakes made by Healy in relation to Messali Haj in the mid-1950s (to the extent of lying about his own role at the time), he says nothing about the Algerian controversy as it arose in 1962-63. He does not say whether or not the SLL was right or wrong to oppose the Evian agreement or whether he still stands by the SLL's criticism of the Pabloite line on Ben Bella. In their attack on the SLL's criticisms of the Evian agreement, the Pabloites were challenging the right of the proletariat to

adopt an independent and hostile attitude to the policies of the national bourgeoisie.

In defending the Evian agreements as a necessary compromise, Hansen avoided one decisive issue: that the Evian agreement represented a settlement between the political representatives of French imperialism and the Algerian bourgeoisie. It could not be supported by the working class any more than the 1947 agreement whereby Ceylon achieved "independence" from Great Britain. In that period, the Ceylonese Trotskyists voted against the independence agreement, refusing to accept responsibility for or in any way support an arrangement which established a capitalist state, under the hegemony of the national bourgeoisie, in Ceylon. But such lessons were ignored by the SWP. In his sophistries about the inevitability of compromises in politics, Hansen dissolved fundamental principles into tactical exigencies.

While the Pabloites rejected the ICFI's preoccupation with the class nature of the leaderships of the anti-imperialist struggles as "subjective," their theory was one entirely concentrated on the decisive role of nationalist leaders' individual actions. This was most clearly shown in their theory dealing with the role of political elites in the realization of socialism. By acquiring control of the state apparatus, the Pabloites argued, the new ruling stratum frees itself of the influence of the national bourgeoisie:

It is by its administration of the state that this stratum is developing and acquiring social importance, and not by the intrinsic needs of production and its role in production. Under the historical conditions prevailing in the past and up till the last war, such a stratum could have evolved only toward a comprador bourgeoisie in the service of imperialism.

But under the specific present conditions, where it inevitably is subjected to the influence of the powerful movement of the masses and of the rising power of the workers' states, and knows that it can profit by the East-West antagonism, this stratum is taking on a Bonapartist role which it imparts to the whole state, whose economic and social structures are not yet definitively oriented toward an inevitably classic capitalist development.<sup>9</sup>

The perspective which flowed from this analysis placed the possibility of socialist transformation upon the subjective decisions of the ruling elites, who supposedly stood above the main classes in society and acted independently of them. Therefore, the best course of action open to the Fourth International would be to attempt to gain access to such leaders in order to influence them. Pablo put this theory into practice by actually becoming a functionary in the Ben Bella regime.

The conception that socialism was not necessarily the outcome of the conscious struggle of the working class was absolutely central to Hansen's purely economic definition of a workers' state: He stated in June 1962:

Let me recapitulate the main concepts: a workers state is basically defined by the expropriation of the holdings of the capitalist class in the key sectors of industry, transportation and finance; the establishment of a government monopoly of foreign trade; and the introduction of a planned economy. Deviation from the norm of a healthy workers state relates fundamentally to the political sphere; i.e. the relative amount of proletarian democracy.<sup>10</sup>

For Hansen, the historical and political foundations of the workers' state — all that was related to the development of the proletariat as a social force imbued with consciousness of its revolutionary mission, the seizure of power and the creation of those specific forms through which the dictatorship of the class is exercised — were not at all intrinsic to the determination of a workers' state. Furthermore, in as much as socialism could be introduced "from above" in the backward countries and did not depend upon the proletarian revolution, the SWP inevitably drew the conclusion that the struggle to build a revolutionary party of the proletariat was not essential. Hansen wrote, "Experience has demonstrated that forces which are socialist minded but not Bolshevik can come to power and undertake a series of measures that in certain circumstances go so far as to transcend private capitalism, providing the base for a workers state."<sup>11</sup>

This liquidationist position was spelled out in the programmatic resolution adopted at the Reunification Congress of the SWP and the Pabloites held in June 1963: "The

weakness of the enemy in the backward countries has opened the possibility of coming to power even with a blunted instrument.' <sup>12</sup> Revealed in these words were the full historical implications of the 1963 split. The position of the Pabloites could mean nothing else but that neither the existence of the Fourth International nor the conquest of state power by the working class was necessary for the realization of socialism.

The position that Marxist parties are not necessary in backward countries leads inexorably to the conclusion that they are not necessary anywhere in the world. If the necessity or non-necessity of a Marxist party is to be determined by the weakness of a national ruling class in a given part of the world, it follows that the establishment of "socialist" regimes in a number of backward countries would inevitably create such a devastating crisis in the United States, Europe and Japan that socialism could be established in these countries with similarly "blunted," i.e., non-Marxist instruments. Moreover, since the building of Marxist parties is nothing else but the conscious expression of the revolutionary role of the working class as the sole bearer of new social relations, the denial of the need for such a party implies that socialism is not necessarily realized through the medium of the proletarian class struggle.

The rejection of the revolutionary role of the proletariat was central to the perspective of the Pabloites. They specifically asserted that the focus of the work of their international movement was no longer the advanced capitalist countries. Instead, they declared at their Sixth Congress that "it is necessary for the Fourth International to reorganize its activities as an International in terms of the principal sector of the world revolution, which is the colonial revolution, and carry on in this field, for a whole period, the essential part of its efforts."<sup>13</sup>

The Pabloites specifically wrote off any attempt to organize the proletariat in the backward countries independently of the bourgeoisie:

Revolutionary Marxist elements who operate in these dependent countries do not always have the possibility of opposing from the outside and in a completely independent

way the existing national movements with bourgeois leadership or ideology, for in this case they would run the risk of cutting themselves off from the broad masses and remaining in practice ineffective. While taking on everywhere the task of open revolutionary-Marxist publications which clarify the problems and trace out a clear perspective, they may find themselves obliged to carry on the essential part of their activity inside the existing national movements of a mass and revolutionary character, and to advocate within them a wing of a proletarian and socialist orientation.<sup>14</sup>

The rejection of the proletariat could not be clearer. The Pabloite formula consisted of the following: while concentrating "the essential part of its efforts" in the colonial countries, they would conduct "the essential part of their activity" inside the national movements.

The British and French sections of the International Committee refused to send delegations to the Pabloite Reunification Congress, which set up the United Secretariat. Instead, the ICFI met in September 1963 to draw the political balance sheet of the struggle against Pabloism. The principal report was given by Cliff Slaughter:

The fight against revisionism in the Trotskyist movement, particularly in the Socialist Workers Party, has revealed a basic difference in *method*. The Socialist Workers Party leaders have abandoned Marxism for empiricism, they have abandoned that method which starts *from the point of view of changing the world*, as against interpreting or contemplating it. The far greater part of the work in the struggle against this revisionism remains still to be done on our part. It is not enough to be able to demonstrate the descent into empiricism by the revisionists — our problem is to build around this fight against revisionism, sections of the Fourth International able to lead the advance guard of the working class. Looking at the world from the point of view of changing it, means today, starting from the point of view of the construction of disciplined revolutionary parties able to intervene in the struggles of the working class, able to build the Fourth International out of their interventions. These parties are proletarian parties, whose work and methods correspond to the general interests of the working class. In the advanced countries, such parties are

only built in implacable opposition to the petty-bourgeois circles who have dominated "official" left politics during the comparative prosperity since 1945. Inside our movement this means a constant fight to build a cadre consciously opposed to the way of life of the centrist propaganda circles who provide a left cover for the bureaucracy. This is the direct *opposite* of the Pabloite theory and practice of support for the bureaucracy, which takes the form of supporting supposedly "left" trends inside the Stalinist bureaucracy, believing even that they will be forced to take the power in the capitalist countries or to carry out the political revolution in the workers' states. Alternatively it leads to "deep entry" in the Social-Democracy, justified by the hoped-for emergence of mass "left centrist" parties.

In the backward countries, fighting to resolve the crisis of leadership means fighting for the construction of *proletarian* parties, with the aim of proletarian dictatorship. It is especially necessary to stress the proletarian character of the leadership in countries with a large petty-bourgeoisie or peasantry. On this question, the revisionists take the opposite road to Lenin and Trotsky, justifying their capitulation to petty-bourgeois, nationalist leaderships by speculation about a new type of peasantry. In recent years, the Pabloites have declared that the character of the new states in Africa will be determined by the social character and decisions of the *elite* which occupies state power, rather than by the class struggle as we have understood it. More recently, Pablo and others have discovered "the revolutionary role of the peasantry." These are only thin disguises for capitulation to the petty-bourgeois leadership of the FLN in Algeria and of Castro in Cuba. Above all, the "theory" that the "epicentre of the world revolution" has shifted to the colonial and semi-colonial countries, for all its revolutionary appearance, is used to justify this capitulation.<sup>15</sup>

Slaughter was especially scathing in his denunciation of the Pabloite conception of an "International" whose leaders saw their main role as that of semi-official advisers of those in charge of bourgeois national movements. Slaughter hardly could have suspected then that within little more than a decade Healy, Banda and he would be playing precisely such a role in relation to nationalist movements in the Middle

East. In a passage which was in 1963 a devastating indictment of Pabloism, but which reads today like a prophetic analysis of the demise of the Workers Revolutionary Party, Slaughter explained:

Such orientation produces a particular type of national section and a particular type of leadership within the Pabloite International. Around the publications of this group there gather numbers of petty-bourgeois intellectuals who very easily accept a standpoint of "principled" but quite abstract avowals of Marxism, divorced from any struggle to construct a leadership against the enemies of Marxism and of the working class. Such groups seek constantly for "alliances" with all kinds of centrist trends, cultivating the most naive illusions about the "leftward" tendencies of these "allies" in Parliamentary and Trade Union circles, as in Britain and Belgium. The real task of Marxists, to "go deeper and deeper into the working class" to build a power which will smash the bureaucracy, is anathema to these circles. To such a political way of life, the message that it is most important to encourage the "left centrists" is a gift from heaven. The leaders of this International are, more and more, men of "influence," men with "reputations" in petty-bourgeois circles, and not working-class leaders, not leaders familiar with the intimate and detailed problems of the working class and the revolutionary party.<sup>16</sup>

As he brought his report to a close, Slaughter denounced the passage in the Reunification Resolution which spoke about "building revolutionary parties in the process of the revolution itself," declaring that

this is only the most extreme of the hypocritical formulae in which the Resolution abounds. It is precisely in the revolutionary situations of Algeria and Cuba that the building of the independent party had been most blatantly abandoned, on the assumption that the petty-bourgeois leaders themselves will become revolutionary Marxists. Even if the formulation were taken seriously as a contribution to theory, it would have to be immediately rejected as false. The task of revolutionaries is never to speculate about whether there is "time" for the party to be constructed, but work in all the stages of development of the class struggle, guided by the long-term, revolutionary

interests of the working class, to steel the revolutionary party in struggle against every arm of the capitalist class and its state, to develop a Bolshevik cadre with bonds of steel uniting it with every section of the proletariat. This constant struggle, through periods of black reaction as well as in times of revolutionary upsurge, is the only guarantee of preparedness in the struggle for power. Even such a party, when the revolution occurs, will find it necessary to overcome internal conflict, hesitations, even desertions, as Lenin found in 1917. Such a perspective is absolutely alien to the facile notion of "building parties in the process of revolution itself."<sup>17</sup>

These words are as correct today as they were in 1963. Slaughter has since rejected them — going so far as to vote against a resolution introduced by the International Committee in December 1985 which reaffirmed the stand that was taken by the British Trotskyists in the struggle against the SWP-Pabloite reunification. The fact that Slaughter repudiates his own words does not invalidate the past struggle or his own role in it. He has not simply changed his mind; rather, he has changed his class position. What he once accomplished remains part of the heritage of the Trotskyist movement, and we quote against him today the very words with which he concluded his 1963 report: "Our fight against revisionism in the Fourth International is a vitally necessary part of our revolutionary political work in the working class. It is the revolutionary practice which will surely enable the Fourth International to provide the leadership of all those communists who come to take their place in the coming final battles of the working class to overthrow the power of world capital."<sup>18</sup>

The Socialist Labour League's struggle against reunification enriched the Trotskyist movement's understanding of the nature of Pabloite revisionism. The truth of Slaughter's statement — that the struggle against revisionism was at the heart of building the Fourth International — was demonstrated in the very process of the SLL's defense of the International Committee. The documents produced by the SLL represented a renewal of the historical perspective upon which the Fourth International had been based. The Pabloites found it was nothing less than shocking that the SLL should claim that the task of organizing the world socialist



revolution, of rebuilding within the workers' movement that once mighty socialist culture which had been virtually destroyed by the betrayals of social democracy and Stalinism, fell to the Trotskyist movement; and that the Castros, the Ben Bellas, and the Nassers, far from representing the road to power, were obstacles on that road, whose authority over the mass movement in their countries reflected the unresolved problems of the proletarian leadership.

Against the "fashionable opportunism" of the Pabloites — Hansen actually told the SLL that its critical line toward Castro meant political suicide in Latin America — the British Trotskyists defended the line of building revolutionary parties based on the international proletariat. A clear orientation to the working class, in opposition to the bureaucracies and petty-bourgeois leaderships which dominated the mass movement in any given country, was provided by the SLL. It told Trotskyists all over the world that the Fourth International had to construct the revolutionary parties of the proletariat in merciless struggle against all other tendencies, no matter how big, powerful or popular they appeared to be.

The subsequent degeneration of Healy, Banda and Slaughter in no way detracts from the historical significance of the SLL's struggle against reunification. The stand taken by the SLL in defense of the International Committee in 1961-63 against the betrayal of the Socialist Workers Party maintained the revolutionary continuity of Trotskyism and prevented the liquidation of the Fourth International. It carried forward the entire programmatic heritage of the Fourth International and reestablished the foundation for the building of the Trotskyist movement as the world party of socialist revolution.

# 29

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## The Historic Betrayal in Ceylon

Within five months of the June 1963 Pabloite Reunification Congress, an event occurred which exposed the reactionary petty-bourgeois perspective which lay behind the SWP's betrayal of Trotskyism. President John F. Kennedy was assassinated on November 22, 1963 as he rode through Dallas in a motorcade. The Socialist Workers Party's response was unprecedented in the annals of revolutionary Marxism. Its national secretary, Farrell Dobbs, sent a message of condolence to Kennedy's widow, which was published in the *Militant* December 2, 1963: "The Socialist Workers Party condemns the brutal assassination of President Kennedy as an inhuman, anti-social and criminal act. We extend our deepest sympathy to Mrs. Kennedy and the children in their personal grief...."

"Political differences within our society must be settled in an orderly manner by majority decision after free and open public debate in which all points of view are heard."

During the controversy over Castroism, Hansen had argued that the SLL's claim that the SWP had degenerated was disproved by its defense of the Cuban Revolution in the face of American imperialism. But when confronted with the Kennedy assassination, a cowardly panic seized hold of the SWP leadership. Terrified by the prospect of an anticommunist witch-hunt, the SWP leaders shamelessly groveled before US imperialism.

The first issue of the *Militant* published after the assassination, dated December 2, 1963, favorably quoted the eulogies of Kennedy given at the dead president's funeral. The speech of Chief Justice Earl Warren was cited as an example of "penetrating and cogent comments by serious thinkers and writers." A line from Warren's speech was used as the headline of the *Militant's* article: "If we really love this country we must abjure hatred."

Despite the fact that Banda's "27 Reasons" is loaded with vitriolic denunciations of the SWP, he is strangely silent on this truly shameful episode. This is not accidental: he attacks the SWP only for those actions it took while it was still a Trotskyist party and was defending the principles of the Fourth International. But once the SWP broke with Trotskyism, Banda chooses to say nothing about its real crimes. Thus, he denounces Cannon's conduct in 1941 while on trial in Minneapolis for sedition as "political cowardice and capitulation to the backward sections of the US working class..." But he overlooks the SWP's open declaration of solidarity with the American ruling class just a few months after its split with the International Committee.

The Socialist Labour League understood the class significance of the SWP's telegram and denounced it publicly. In an article entitled "Marxists and the Kennedy Assassination," Gerry Healy wrote:

The assassination of President Kennedy has given rise to a more than usual round of hysteria, tear-jerking and praise-mongering by the literary and political representatives of the middle class.

Reading some of the articles in the so-called socialist and liberal press about his life, one might be forgiven for thinking that Kennedy stood for the freedom of the Negro people and was, in fact, a socialist in all but name.

Thus do the hirelings of international capital endeavour to whitewash the most reactionary imperialist power in the world in its hour of crisis.

Kennedy was, of course, a most able representative of his class. Everything that he did had but one objective, to strengthen American imperialism.

When he spoke about Negro rights, he was merely using high-sounding liberal phraseology so that he could all the

better, on behalf of his class, continue to enslave the Negro people.

Marxists express no sympathy whatsoever over Kennedy's death. He was just another imperialist tyrant.

We do not condone the act of individual terror responsible for his death, not because we are squeamish or humanitarian about how it was done, but because individual terror is no substitute for the construction of the revolutionary party.

Terrorism is a weapon which in fact disorganises and leaves the working class leaderless. It creates the impression that the removal of prominent capitalist politicians and statesmen can solve the problems of the working class.

But for every tyrant shot, there is another ready to take his place. Only the overthrow of the capitalist system in the United States and its replacement by working-class power and socialism can solve the problems of the American working-class whites and Negroes.<sup>1</sup>

Healy then analyzed the response of the SWP to the killing: "When Lee Oswald fired the fatal shot, he did something more than assassinate a president.

"He also destroyed utterly and completely the lie that the Socialist Workers Party of the United States is a Trotskyist party and that it continues the traditions for which it was founded in the struggle to build the Fourth International."<sup>2</sup>

Denouncing the SWP statement as a "nauseating report ... written by cowardly liberals whose eyes are turned solely in the direction of the American middle-class," Healy heaped scorn on the telegram's call for the settlement of "political differences" in "an orderly manner."

Indeed! Tell that to the Negroes of Birmingham, Alabama, and the miners of Kentucky. Tell that to the millions of colonial people in struggle against imperialism.

The settlement of class issues will not take place in an orderly manner, but in a violent way, because the ruling class will never give up its power peacefully. To the millions of working people in struggle against imperialism all over the world, Dobbs is just one more American liberal, who talks the language of "order" so as to mask the brutality of his own imperialist government.<sup>3</sup>

Healy was correct to stress the political significance of the SWP's reaction to the Kennedy assassination. Suddenly confronted with a political crisis that reflected the enormous

class tensions that lie just beneath the surface of American society, the SWP showed clearly where its class allegiance lay. One has only to compare Dobbs's message to the simple and laconic remark of Malcolm X who, though not a Marxist, understood far more clearly than the SWP the implications of Kennedy's assassination for American imperialism: "The chickens," he said, "are coming home to roost."

The reaction of the SWP to the Kennedy assassination provided irrefutable proof that its reunification with the Pabloites was bound up with its abandonment of a revolutionary perspective for the American working class. But it was, still, only an episode. The really world historic implications of the SWP-Pabloite reunification came in June 1964, when the LSSP, the Ceylonese section of the Pabloite "International," entered the bourgeois coalition government of Mme. Bandaranaike. This was truly the August Fourth of Pabloism. For the first time in history, a party claiming to be Trotskyist had entered a bourgeois government. This betrayal had been prepared over many years, and the Pabloites were fully responsible for this political crime. After June 1964, there could no longer be any doubt about the counterrevolutionary role of Pabloism.

From 1953 on, the deepening political crisis inside the LSSP, its transformation from a revolutionary into a reformist party, was mirrored in its support for the liquidationist line of Pablo. The LSSP had opposed the issuing of the "Open Letter," preserved its organizational links with the International Secretariat, and played a crucial role in orchestrating the reunification of the SWP with the European Pabloites. The LSSP's support for the Pabloites was bound up with the development of powerful opportunist tendencies within its leadership who were pressing ever more openly for direct political alliances with the national bourgeoisie in Ceylon. In turn, the development of these relations, which led eventually to the LSSP's entrance into a bourgeois government, were sanctioned by the Pabloites.

No one knows better than Banda the criminal responsibility of the Pabloites for the betrayal of the Ceylonese working class. He knows that from the 1950s on, the attitude of the ICFI to the politics of the LSSP was diametrically opposed to

that of the Pabloites. After the 1953 split, both Healy and Cannon had recognized the opportunist character of the LSSP leadership. In 1957, Healy reacted hostilely to the unity proposal of Leslie Goonewardene by stressing, in letters to Cannon, the right-wing orientation of the LSSP. The clear political division between the ICFI and the Pabloites — that is, the struggle of Marxism against opportunism — found its most direct expression in their relationship to the LSSP. For this reason, Banda shamelessly attempts to suppress this record and rewrite history in accordance with his present factional needs. He declares:

More to the point is the manifest failure of the IC to make any effective intervention in the LSSP which since 1958 was drifting progressively to the right and towards accommodating with the SLFP. From 1960 to 1964 the IC *said nothing* in the hope that the centrists in the LSSP might come over to the IC. In this situation Pablo split from Mandel and augmented his credibility with the anti-coalition faction by opposing the N.M. Perera-Colvin da Silva group before the IC did so.

What an outrageous liar! Banda's deviousness is illustrated by his cynical selection of 1958 as the year in which the rightward drift of the LSSP began to manifest itself. He chooses 1958 simply to avoid having to take note of the criticisms of the LSSP's line made by the ICFI as early as 1956. As we have noted in previous chapters, the SWP characterized the line of the LSSP as "national opportunism" in January 1956 and publicly condemned its opportunism in relation to Chinese Stalinism in an editorial published in the *Militant* in March 1957. In April 1957 Healy wrote at length about the degeneration of the LSSP in a letter to Tom Kerry:

One of the things which greatly disturbs us is the deterioration in Ceylon. Colvin de Silva and Perera were here a few days ago and made no effort to see us. We learned that they were defending their policy on Chou En-lai and attacked us as sectarians. There seems to be a definite movement away there and this could of course be very important for the future. In 1954 they were with us fairly solid politically but now they are healing over towards Pablo. Here is an extract from a report submitted to our

E.C. by one of our comrades who spoke to an English Pabloite.

“Bornstein told us that Colvin visited him on March 20. Colvin R. de Silva told him that he has recently received a letter from Comrade G. Healy ‘asking him to make specific demands to the Chinese delegation.’ Colvin stated that when he finished reading the letter he burst out laughing and thought that ‘Healy is mad.’ Bornstein said that he has seen the letter and agreed with Colvin that the demands contained in the letter were not only infantile but impossible at this stage because, as Bornstein puts it, the Stalinists are in process of change for the better and that it was possible, Bornstein added, for the Stalinist leadership to learn from their own terrible experiences; and that to make such demands would impede the democratisation of the C.P. in China.”<sup>4</sup>

On May 10, 1957 Healy wrote again to Cannon and again raised the question of the crisis in the LSSP:

Pablo is well aware of the opportunism of our Ceylonese leadership and true to type he is pushing them along. It is impossible for us to remain silent on this matter. Furthermore we have to take into account that the LSSP leaders have moved further away from the orthodox Trotskyist position since 1954. At his Fourth Congress Pablo included a few of their amendments and they capitulated. They are now further away from us politically than at any time previously. For example, the Trotskyist-dominated Ceylon Federation of Labor sent the following May Day Greetings to the Russian Trade Unions:

“Ceylon Federation of Labour sends you and Soviet people fraternal May Day Greetings and pledges support against all imperialist threats to your country.” — N.M. Perera, President.

Not one word about Hungary and the revolutionary fighters in the USSR. Instead it lends aid and comfort to the Stalinist bureaucracy which in turn will use this to maintain its hold over the Soviet masses.<sup>5</sup>

Banda is, of course, familiar with these letters; he probably worked with Healy in drafting them. Yet he makes no reference to them because they underscore the opposition of the International Committee to the opportunism of the LSSP, an opportunism that was abetted by the Pabloites. If it were

not for the fact that it would cut across his present political needs, Banda could write volumes about the insidious role played by Mandel and Pablo in preparing the ground for the betrayal of the LSSP.

When the bourgeois Sri Lankan Freedom Party (SLFP) came to power in 1956 with the support of the Philip Goonewardene group and formed the MEP government, the LSSP gave it critical support, while the revisionist International Secretariat applauded the "irreversible movements" towards socialism. The Bandaranaike government attempted to utilize the general upsurge of the masses and the conditions of the economic boom in the West to wrest some concessions for the native capitalist class and even created the illusion, albeit temporarily, that the national bourgeoisie could establish its independence from imperialism.

Bandaranaike nationalized the transport services and the Colombo Harbor, closed down the imperialist bases at Trincomalee and Katunayake, protected the local market from the penetration of cheaper commodities from the imperialist countries and used income from tea and rubber to give an impetus to the development of local industry. These measures exhausted the ingenuity of the Ceylonese bourgeoisie. Simultaneously, it implemented a viciously chauvinist policy directed against the Tamils and plantation workers.

The ranks of the working class expanded considerably, due to the increased activities of the private and public sector. Bandaranaike's anti-imperialist demagogy, however, could not contain the demands of the working class for higher living standards and it won important concessions from the state. The LSSP was forced to lead these struggles.

When Bandaranaike sought to curtail the democratic rights of the working class through the introduction of the Public Security (Special Provisions) Act, the LSSP organized a one-day protest general strike, against which the Stalinists, predictably, scabbed. Sections of the native bourgeoisie came into conflict with Bandaranaike over his inability to deal with working class militancy and they organized his assassination in 1959.

By that time, the degeneration of the LSSP was far advanced. In the 1960 general elections, the party put



forward, for the first time in its history, a perspective of coming to power through parliament. It contested about 100 seats, but only 15 were elected. The elections showed that the capitalist class was working for the return of the old UNP, which formed a minority government in March 1960. When the new government collapsed immediately after issuing its basic policy statement, the LSSP decided to support the SLFP in the July 1960 elections.

At its party conference in 1960, N.M. Perera moved a resolution to form a coalition government with the SLFP. This was accepted by the conference, but overturned by the central committee. The arguments advanced by Perera were entirely compatible with the conceptions that had been advanced by Pablo for years. Perera's resolution declared:

"Concretely ... the LSSP party will have to take the following steps. First of all enter into a no-contest pact to fight the forthcoming elections. In the campaign itself, declare our readiness to support the formation of an SLFP (Sri Lanka Freedom Party) government. This must not be hedged about with conditions otherwise we will weaken the forces ready to rally round an alternative government. Secondly, steps must be taken to bring about a programmatic agreement with the SLFP with a view to forming a joint government....

It is possible to denigrate such a line of action as class-collaboration and condemn it out of hand. This charge of class collaboration is only tenable if the class character of the SLFP as a petty-bourgeois party is not accepted. In any case, such entrism tactics in respect of reformist social-democratic parties are nothing new. Admittedly we are taking entrism a stage further by accepting office. But is this not the best way of taking the masses through the experience necessary to dispel their illusions, and creating confidence in our genuineness. A few bold progressive measures sponsored by us will enable them to learn more than years of propaganda by us. These measures should be such as to be in line with our socialist programme and such as would carry our socialist policies forward.<sup>6</sup>

On September 16, 1960 the International Secretariat wrote a lengthy document addressed to the ranks of the LSSP, which justified every point of the LSSP's capitulation to the SLFP:

A dangerous situation arose especially after the Bandaranaike assassination. It is the political leadership of the capitalist class which forced this crisis. As a result of the death of the Prime Minister and the weakening of the parliamentary power of the SLFP a majority of the middle class population were attracted to the UNP, the party of the imperialists. Meanwhile the more reactionary sections were entering the hope of strong government outside the parliamentary democratic system.... In other words, although the masses were prepared to defend their gains, they were not ready to launch an anti-capitalist movement on a revolutionary political basis.<sup>7</sup>

All these arguments were rationalizations which served to cover up for the opportunism of the LSSP. Adapting itself to the LSSP's capitulation to the SLFP, the International Secretariat declared:

We accept that it is possible for a revolutionary party to give critical support to a non-working class government (whether middle class or capitalist) in a colonial or semi-colonial country. But this support should be on two important conditions. One is to support the progressive measures helpful to the victory of the revolutionary movement. The other is to educate the masses who are under the leadership of the capitalist class or the middle class. This does not imply consistent, direct and unconditional support for non-working class governments.<sup>8</sup>

The Pabloites differed from the LSSP only in that they were in favor of inconsistent, indirect and conditional support for bourgeois regimes, and their acceptance of the right-wing orientation of the LSSP made their mild rebuke of Perera's open call for coalition hypocritical. With the help of the cover provided by the International Secretariat, the LSSP began to move toward accepting a racist policy of rejecting full citizenship rights for the plantation workers.

At the Reunification Congress of the Pabloites in June 1963, the revisionists again covered up the extent of the LSSP's degeneration: "Our *Ceylonese* section has progressively corrected the wrong orientation adopted in 1960 of supporting the liberal-bourgeois government of the SLFP. Since the masses began to go into action, it has not hesitated

to place itself at their head against its electoral allies of yesterday."<sup>9</sup>

The Pabloites proposed to the LSSP that it form a "really socialist united front government" through an alliance with the Communist Party and Philip Goonewardene's MEP. The real meaning of this "United Left Front" line was to complete the conditioning of the LSSP for participation in a popular front government, as the MEP was a racist petty-bourgeois outfit. One month after the Reunification Congress, the LSSP received instructions from the Pabloite International which sanctioned the Indian-Ceylonese agreement to deport hundreds of thousands of plantation workers to India. In a letter written in July 1963, the United Secretariat stated that "we recognize that there is nothing wrong in the principle of negotiations between India and Ceylon on the subject."<sup>10</sup>

In contrast to the cover-ups and deceptions of the United Secretariat, the Socialist Labour League openly denounced the LSSP's treacherous policies. In a letter written by Healy on June 12, 1963 to the SWP National Committee, condemning its reunification with the Pabloites, he pointed bitterly to the SWP's silence on the LSSP's preparation for a betrayal of the Ceylonese working class:

Recently we have read in *The Militant* that 100,000 people attended a May Day rally in Colombo. "The huge turnout," says *The Militant* "was attributed to enthusiasm among the masses at the prospect of a united front between the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (Trotskyist), the Communist Party and the MEP (a smaller group led by Philip Gunawardene)".

Here we go again. Just at the moment that you are splitting from the SLL and are reaffirming Peng as the leader of the Chinese section, you turn the attention of your membership towards "the great LSSP in Ceylon." Of course, you remain discreetly silent about the proceedings at that meeting. You did not tell your membership that when the three left parties, that is the LSSP, the CP and the MEP, were discussing the preparation of the meeting Philip Gunawardene insisted that only political parties should be represented on the platform. His motive was simple and quite reactionary. He wished to exclude the

Indian working class from being represented through their trade unions.

The LSSP to its eternal shame agreed to this farce. It must be remembered that in the past the LSSP was the only party in Ceylon to stand unconditionally for the equality of the Indian Tamil working class. It always sharply opposed Philip Gunawardene of the MEP, whose role at this meeting was utterly reactionary.

You remain silent about what Philip Gunawardene said. With a slip of the tongue he used the word "race" instead of "nation" and then corrected himself. His supporters in the audience shouted "No, not nation: race!" All this time the LSSP sat silent on the platform. Here is the price for such unity.

It is now freely admitted in the LSSP that the leaders are prepared to make real and large concessions on the question of parity of status for Tamil and Singhalese. This is the logic of the capitulation which has led them to support the capitalist government of Mrs. Bandaranaike. You should have told your membership that N.M. Perera, Anil Moonesinghe and other leaders of the LSSP are practicing Buddhists who worship regularly at the temples.<sup>11</sup>

In the critical months preceding the entry of the LSSP into a coalition government led by Bandaranaike, the Pabloite United Secretariat opposed any discussion of the right-wing line of its Ceylonese allies. While Banda refers to Pablo's tactical differences with Mandel over the line on Ceylon — an episodic dispute which has no bearing whatsoever on the evaluation of Pabloism as a political tendency — he does not mention the reply given by the United Secretariat in defense of the LSSP. Declaring that it was necessary to give the LSSP time to prove their "sincerity" and "good faith," the United Secretariat maintained that criticism of the LSSP

"would mean first of all to deliberately heat up the atmosphere in the LSSP by injecting the sharpest kind of factionalism; secondly, to exacerbate matters still further by transferring the dispute to the public arena. A divisive policy of this kind would put in jeopardy if not destroy, fraternal relations between the United Secretariat and the leadership of the LSSP. The end result could be highly injurious to the Fourth International and to the LSSP, including its left wing which has absolutely no interest to

put in question the unity of the party through the creation of undue internal friction and tension from any source."<sup>12</sup>

The record proves that Banda is lying through his teeth when he claims, "The IC intervention was made *only on the very eve* of the split conference in Colombo when Healy tried to gate-crash the conference and gain a cheap advantage at the expense of Pierre Frank and the United Secretariat."

This adolescent gibe does not deserve to be taken seriously. Healy traveled to Ceylon as the representative of the only international tendency that had fought for more than a decade the revisionism that led to the final betrayal of the LSSP. The Pabloite Pierre Frank, a leader of the United Secretariat, had helped prepare that betrayal.

No less cynical and dishonest is Banda's claim, "The IC had no perspective for Sri Lanka except to denounce N.M. Perera *ex post facto*. It was left to Cde Tony Banda to try to pick up the pieces and construct a section." Are we to assume that Tony Banda was working on his own as a political freelancer, and not as a member of the SLL and the ICFI when he traveled to Sri Lanka? If the IC had no perspective, how then does Banda account for the formation of the Revolutionary Communist League, which became the Sri Lankan section of the International Committee?

The International Committee, founded in the struggle against Pabloism more than a decade before revisionism resulted in the entry of a so-called Trotskyist party into a bourgeois government, had a very clear perspective for work in Ceylon. It alone recognized the world-historical significance of the LSSP's betrayal for the Fourth International. In a statement dated July 5, 1964, the ICFI declared:

The entry of the LSSP members into the Bandaranaike coalition marks the end of a whole epoch of the evolution of the Fourth International. It is in direct service to imperialism, in the preparation of a defeat for the working class that revisionism in the world Trotskyist movement has found its expression. The task of reconstructing the Fourth International must be undertaken from the firm basis of constructing revolutionary proletarian parties in every country in struggle against the bureaucratic and opportunist servants of imperialism and against their defenders the

revisionists who usurp the name of Trotskyism and the Fourth International.<sup>13</sup>

Banda makes no reference to another crucial by-product of the Pabloite betrayal in Ceylon. Supporters of the ICFI, led by Tim Wohlforth, who constituted an official minority within the SWP, were suspended because they insisted on a discussion within the party of the historic betrayal that had been carried out by the LSSP, with which the SWP was politically allied. For the "crime" of attempting to circulate to members of the SWP a statement on the entry of the LSSP into a coalition government — an unprecedented event in the history of the Fourth International — Wohlforth and eight other members of the minority tendency were suspended.

The minority tendency had since 1961 fought alongside the International Committee against the degeneration of the SWP leadership. It continued this fight even after the split with the International Committee in order to do everything possible to return the SWP to the road of Trotskyism. However, the events in Ceylon required that extraordinary action be taken to demand a discussion on the crisis in the world Trotskyist movement. The minority's statement, June 30, 1964, declared:

During the whole period from 1961 to 1963 we reiterated time and time again, in political solidarity with the International Committee, that a reunification of the Fourth International without the fullest political discussion prior to the actual reunification could only lead to disaster and the further disintegration of the international movement and the party here. *Our position has been fully vindicated....*

There can no longer be any further refusal to face up to the political, theoretical and methodological crisis tearing apart our party and the international formation to which it is presently in political solidarity. *For the very survival of the party a thoroughgoing discussion of these questions must be organized immediately in all branches.*

We are well aware that such a discussion in between preconvention periods is an extraordinary step. We are demanding such a discussion precisely because we face a crisis of the most extraordinary character. Leninists are never fetishistic over organizational matters. They willingly make adjustments in organizational forms to fit the political

needs of the movement. To perpetuate a sterile discussion during a period when the party has important external work to do is a criminal act against the Bolshevik party. *Not* to organize a discussion when a deep political crisis tears apart the party and the international movement is *at least* as criminal an action. Those who counterpose pressing and necessary party building work to a process essential to the very survival of the party itself are in no sense of the term Leninists.<sup>14</sup>

Ten days later, all nine signatories to this letter were suspended from the SWP. However, they proceeded to form the American Committee for the Fourth International, which in November 1966 was transformed into the Workers League. Thus, the struggle waged by the ICFI against Pabloite revisionism preserved the historical continuity of the Trotskyist movement in the United States.

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## Marxism and the "Breakdown" Theory

Following the 1963 Reunification Congress, the far-ranging implications of the conflict between the International Committee and the United Secretariat were clarified by the rapid development of the class struggle on a world scale. The entry of the Ceylonese Pabloites into the bourgeois government of Mme. Bandaranaike was only the most extreme expression of the role played by Pabloite opportunism throughout the world. The organizations associated with Mandel's United Secretariat functioned more and more openly as auxiliary agencies of imperialism, consciously rejecting the independent revolutionary mobilization of the proletariat, and, instead, insisting upon its subordination to social democracy, Stalinism and bourgeois nationalism.

In the massive social crises which erupted in the imperialist centers in the mid-1960s, shaking the very foundation of capitalist rule, the Pabloites were to play a crucial role in the defense of the European and American bourgeoisie. As the social democratic and Stalinist bureaucracies were shaken by the powerful upsurge of working class militancy, combined with an unprecedented movement of millions of student youth, the Pabloites sought to deflect these mass struggles away from revolutionary socialist goals.

Banda does not trace the political evolution of the United Secretariat after 1963-64. All his attention is directed to denouncing and slandering the International Committee. His aim, as always, is to deny the objective role of the



International Committee, of Trotskyism, as the revolutionary vanguard of the working class. But in attacking the ICFI, Banda succeeds only in exposing the finality of his break with all the theoretical foundations of Marxism.

He makes the following assessment of the perspectives of the International Committee:

Stemming from a totally false analysis of the post-war boom which came dangerously close to the "break-down" theory of early German social-democracy, Healy and the IC saw national and world developments as an apocalyptic and Messianic process. The entire orientation of the 1960s and 1970s was dominated by this bizarre anti-Marxist thesis succinctly summed up in a "Newsletter" headline of 1968: "Crisis, Panic, Crash" (or as the Germans said: "Krisen, Kriegen, Katastrophen").

Not deduction but reduction of every trend to a simple common denominator of the apocalypse. Hence every Labour government was seen as the last government of its kind, every monetary crisis as the final crisis and every bank failure as the threshold to Armageddon. We used to laugh at Behan's lobotomised economics and his theory of the "catastrophic crash" in the early 1960s but Healy's fantasies showed how little the IC had travelled since then.

As is generally the case with Banda's bombastic declamations, we encounter here once again the familiar combination of ignorance and deceit. His gross caricature of the ICFI's perspective precludes any detailed analysis of the actual content and development of its line. He simply declares that the ICFI analysis was "totally false" but does not suggest, let alone elaborate, what a correct line would have been. In fact, what Banda is rejecting is not an incorrect analysis, but rather a Marxist approach to the crisis of capitalism. Behind his attack on the perspective developed by the International Committee during the 1960s is an outlook which is essentially that of a petty-bourgeois reformist.

The economic perspective upon which Banda now heaps ridicule was developed by the International Committee in struggle against the efforts of Mandel to construct an economic justification for the Pabloites' explicit rejection of the decisive revolutionary role of the proletariat in Western Europe and the United States. Prior to reunification, the

Pabloites had announced that the work of their International would be concentrated, for the indefinite future, upon the backward countries, which they proclaimed the "epicenter" of world revolution.

Mandel attempted to bolster this perspective by arguing that there existed no material possibility for the development in the advanced capitalist countries of an economic crisis of such magnitude that would drive the proletariat into revolutionary struggle. The central tenet of his theory of "neo-capitalism" was that the imperialists would never again permit another catastrophic crisis such as that which had occurred in the 1930s. Mandel wrote in 1964, "The necessity of avoiding at all costs a repetition of the 1929 type depression has become a life and death question for capitalism under the conditions of the Cold War and the rise of the anti-capitalist forces on a world scale." <sup>1</sup>

The supposed capacity of the capitalists to regulate the economy in such a way as to avoid catastrophic crises indefinitely was defined by Mandel as the central feature of his neo-capitalism. Well into the 1970s he wrote, "As far as an economic crisis or catastrophe is concerned, ... it has been emphasised and re-emphasised that there are strong reasons why this can be avoided by neo-capitalism for a considerable period." <sup>2</sup>

He insisted that the "initial hypothesis" for Marxists must be "that we cannot expect any catastrophic economic crisis comparable with 1929-32...." <sup>3</sup>

Mandel's conclusions were based on unscientific (i.e., non-Marxist) generalizations from the surface appearance of the movement of capitalism during the postwar boom. His belief in the viability of a managed capitalism amounted to a vote of confidence in the Keynesian mechanisms of controlled inflation that had been erected by US imperialism in the aftermath of World War II. Mandel's outlook was essentially the same as that of the old revisionists at the turn of the century who saw in the use of credit a means through which capitalism could avoid devastating crises. This reformist outlook is now shared by Banda and is the basis of his theoretically-ignorant attack on the perspective of the ICFI.

When Banda claims that the ICFT's analysis of the economic crisis "came dangerously close to the 'break-down' theory of early German social-democracy," he is arguing from the standpoint of the revisionist Bernstein. Whether he knows it or not, the author of the "breakdown" theory was none other than Karl Marx. It is an axiom of Marxist political economy that the movement of the inner contradictions of the capitalist mode of production leads inexorably to its collapse. If that is denied, then there no longer exists any objective necessity for socialism. In her brilliant polemic against Bernstein, *Reform or Revolution*, Rosa Luxemburg was emphatic on the inevitability of an economic collapse of the capitalist system:

Socialist theory up to now declared that the point of departure for a transformation to socialism would be a general and catastrophic crisis. We must distinguish in this outlook two things: the fundamental idea and its exterior form.

The fundamental idea consists of the affirmation that capitalism, as a result of its own inner contradictions, moves toward a point when it will be unbalanced, when it will simply become impossible. There were good reasons for conceiving that juncture in the form of a catastrophic general commercial crisis. But that is of secondary importance when the fundamental idea is considered.<sup>4</sup>

The political significance of attempts by revisionism to deny the possibility of collapse was clearly explained by Luxemburg:

Revisionist theory thus places itself in a dilemma. Either the socialist transformation is, as was admitted up to now, the consequence of the internal contradictions of capitalism, and with the growth of capitalism will develop its inner contradictions, resulting inevitably, at some point, in its collapse, (in that case the "means of adaptation" are ineffective and the theory of collapse is correct); or the "means of adaptation" will really stop the collapse of the capitalist system and thereby enable capitalism to maintain itself by suppressing its own contradictions. In that case socialism ceases to be a historic necessity. It then becomes anything you want to call it, but is no longer the result of the material development of society.

The dilemma leads to another. Either revisionism is correct in its position on the course of capitalist development, and therefore the socialist transformation of society is only a utopia, or socialism is not a utopia, and the theory of "means of adaptation" is false. There is the question in a nutshell.<sup>5</sup>

Therefore, Banda's attempt to indict the International Committee for subscribing to a "breakdown" theory merely leads to his own conviction as a reformist ignoramus. In upholding the "breakdown" theory, in opposition to Mandel's "discovery" of a new type of capitalism ("neo-capitalism") capable of suppressing indefinitely its own contradictions, the ICFI concretely investigated the internal connection between the "adaptive" mechanisms employed by the American bourgeoisie at the end of the war and the essential movement of the basic contradictions of the capitalist mode of production. In other words, the ICFI analyzed the framework of Bretton Woods as a contradictory expression of the insoluble crisis of world capitalism. It demonstrated that the complex system of monetary arrangements, credit mechanisms and trade agreements, centered on dollar-gold convertibility, set up in order to counteract the law of value and the tendency of the rate of profit to decline, was inevitably subordinated to that law and tendency and became over time the medium for their explosive manifestation.

The great contribution made by the ICFI — and for this the main credit must go to the British Trotskyists — was that they pierced the contradictory appearance of the postwar boom and insisted that a massive economic crisis, fraught with revolutionary implications for the working class, was rapidly maturing. In a series of statements issued between 1964 and 1968, the Socialist Labour League correctly argued that in the very basis of capitalist restabilization in the immediate postwar period, the domination of the world economy by the United States symbolized by the role of the dollar as the international reserve currency, lay the source of gigantic contradictions and inevitable upheavals.

From the standpoint of Marxism, the significance of these analyses consisted first of all in their examination of the material basis, in the crisis of the capitalist mode of

production, for the development of the international class struggle and, second, in the elaboration, on this scientific foundation, of a correct revolutionary strategy. Under conditions of American imperialism's genocidal war against Vietnam, this enabled the ICFI to establish the objective unity between the Vietnamese masses and the working class in the advanced capitalist countries, especially the United States.

From this analysis flowed political perspectives diametrically opposed to that of the Pabloites, whose protest politics were based on the denial of the material basis for revolutionary struggle by the working class. The ICFI insisted that the same economic crisis which lay behind the imperialist war against Vietnam was driving the working class into revolutionary struggles against the imperialists. The turn to the proletariat and the struggle to build the revolutionary party had to be based on this perspective.

The perspective of the ICFI might deserve the term "apocalyptic" only if, by making a caricature of the "breakdown" theory, it had claimed that a cataclysmic economic crisis would lead inevitably, independently of the actions of the revolutionary party, to the conquest of power by the working class. But no honest reading of the statements of the International Committee would sustain such an allegation. There was not a trace of fatalism in the analyses of the ICFI. It never claimed that any economic crisis, by itself, would be the last crisis of the capitalist system. Rather, the International Committee approached the crisis from the standpoint of the political tasks which it posed to the Trotskyist movement.

The relationship between the ICFI analysis of the economic crisis and its political perspective is exemplified in a statement entitled "US imperialism faces its most serious crisis," dated January 1, 1968. We will quote only a few of its most important passages:

1. For the past half century and more capitalism has been a system in permanent crisis. During this century it has plunged the working class into two world wars and experienced a 20-year period of stagnation and massive unemployment between the wars in which in Germany,

Italy and Spain it has had to resort to fascism to smash the working-class movement. At the same time, stagnation and famine condemn millions, indeed the greater part of the world population, to starvation, malnutrition and disease.

The capitalist system, should it survive, holds out before mankind only one prospect: that of a relapse back into barbarism. Imperialism cannot develop the forces of production because the ownership of the means of production rests in private hands, with the world economy divided into a series of antagonistic nation states.

These basic, inescapable contradictions were ever present throughout the relative boom which capitalism experienced after the end of the last war, despite the fact that these contradictions did not reveal themselves openly "on the surface."

2. Our perspective in economics must start, therefore, from the nature of the present epoch as one characterized by a social system, capitalism, in crisis, in which the crisis of leadership in the class is the main question. Capitalism has survived in this century, not through any inherent strength, but only because the working class has been unable to solve this crisis of leadership and take advantage of the series of economic and political crises which have shaken the capitalist system during the course of this century. The period since 1945 has been no exception to this characterization.

Capitalism in Western Europe survived the war and its aftermath principally because of the collaborationist policies of the Kremlin bureaucracy. Europe and Germany were divided, with the Communist Parties of France and Italy carrying out the logic of the Kremlin's policies of "peaceful co-existence" heading off the struggles of the working class for power in both these countries....

4. The resultant expansion of world trade and production — the boom — was financed largely through means of the dollar which has now displaced sterling as the main international currency. The position of the dollar was an expression of the relative strength of US capitalism and its dominance over the weaker capitalist powers. The Americans were able to maintain the pre-war agreement which guaranteed the dollar against a fixed price of gold. The American gold holdings accumulated before and during the war expressed its development at the expense of European and Japanese capitalism.

5. The very consequences of the boom have now made the dollar the centre of the world currency crisis. This crisis in the world monetary system was not a crisis "in itself." It was, and is, the expression of a deeper and more fundamental crisis, which ultimately stems from the contradictions between the development of the productive forces and the private ownership of the means of production....

9... The Russian Revolution, followed by the Chinese Revolution and the loss of control by the capitalists in large areas of Eastern Europe, were enormous body blows against the capitalist system. Not only were these areas of the world lost as markets, but they no longer provided fields for the profitable export of capital or the extraction of raw materials.

These losses, the result of successful struggles by the international working class, are now a major factor accentuating the crisis faced by the capitalist system involving a renewed attempt by the capitalists of Western Europe and North America to regain these lost areas through military conquests.

10. Thus the present stage of the crisis cannot be reduced merely to "economic" factors. The offensive of the working class throughout Europe and North America is now the decisive factor standing in the way of the capitalist class as it attempts to find some temporary way out of its world crisis.

The capitalist system is incapable of rational planning and control. Only a drive to step up the exploitation of the working class of the world offers any temporary "solution" for capitalism. This must involve as a central aim, the drive through the state to break up the organization and resistance of the working class. Hence the concerted attempts in all countries, Britain, France, the United States and West Germany to integrate the unions into the state and to control wages through the capitalist state machine.... Hence the political radicalization of the European and American working class resulting from this state intervention....

11... The present economic crisis, therefore, resolves itself into a struggle by the capitalists to retain power and a fight by the working class to destroy that power. Only through the building of the Fourth International and its parties can

the economic crisis be solved in the interests of the working class. <sup>6</sup>

This statement — only one of many that appeared in the press of the International Committee — was not simply a description of what was taking place. In contrast to the sterile objectivist commentaries of the Pabloites, the ICFI's analysis grasped as a dynamic and interconnected whole the relation between the "logical" development of the capitalist crisis, the historical unfolding of the class struggle, and the subjective intervention of the revolutionary party. The basic tendencies in the crisis were correctly assessed. As events were to prove, the ICFI demonstrated tremendous political foresight in grasping the implications of the economic situation for the development of the international class struggle.

This statement appeared on the eve of the most explosive developments in the class struggle since the end of World War II. Within three weeks of this statement's publication, US imperialism was staggered by a devastating military and political setback in Vietnam, the Tet Offensive. On March 31, 1968, Lyndon Johnson announced that he would not seek reelection to the presidency. In April, following the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, virtually every major American city was engulfed by ghetto uprisings unprecedented in their violence and fury. And in May, the most massive general strike in the history of Europe erupted in France, shattering almost overnight the stability of the capitalist state and placing the seizure of power by the working class on the agenda. The survival of French, and, therefore European, capitalism depended upon the treachery of the French Communist Party.

In attacking the analyses of the ICFI, Banda is counting on the collective political amnesia of his readers. If the actual course of development between 1968 and 1975 is kept in mind, then the headline which Banda cites as proof of the ICFI's "bizarre" disorientation, "Crisis, Panic, Crash," does not appear at all ridiculous. As a matter of fact, the article, written by Healy, was published in the March 19, 1968 issue of *Newsletter*, in the midst of the Paris gold crisis which destabilized the international currency and which directly preceded the May-June explosion of student-worker strug-



gles. Healy's claim that the economic crisis placed the question of power before the working class was to be confirmed in France within just eight weeks.

The events of 1968 opened up a period of unprecedented crisis for world imperialism. The interaction of economic contradictions and working class struggles produced, in country after country, tremendous political upheavals. That these upheavals did not result in the overthrow of world capitalism is due, above all, to the treachery of Stalinism, social democracy and their Pabloite accomplices.

The breakdown of the Bretton Woods system on August 15, 1971 did lead, as the ICFI had anticipated, to an enormous development of the international class struggle. Imperialism was besieged as never before. The eruption of levels of inflation without precedent in the postwar period was followed by the most severe world recession (1973-75) since the 1930s. The end of dollar-gold convertibility — the linchpin of the postwar expansion of world trade and monetary stability — had devastating political consequences: the 1973 Arab-Israeli war and the oil boycott; the British coal miners strike and the fall of the Tory government; the fall of the Portuguese fascist dictatorship in April 1974; the fall of the Greek junta in July 1974; the resignation of Nixon in August 1974; and the defeat of US imperialism in Vietnam in April-May 1975.

A concrete study of the political upheavals of 1973-75 would show that the survival of capitalism depended, no less than in 1918-1919, on the treachery of the old organizations of the working class. The smallness of the revolutionary forces of the Fourth International was itself a consequence of the political betrayals of Pabloite revisionism, which had done so much to disorient and disperse the cadre of the Trotskyist movement. Nowhere was the criminal role of Pabloism exposed so starkly as it was in Latin America. Its glorification of Castro and the creation of a cult of Guevara led to the abandonment of the struggle to construct revolutionary leadership in the working class and the physical destruction of countless cadre. The Pabloites themselves would later describe their policies in Latin America as a disaster, but not

before their actions had played a major role in preparing the defeat of the working class in Chile and Argentina.

The International Committee emphasized the revolutionary implications of the economic crisis. That this crisis did not result in the overthrow of capitalism in any country does not invalidate the analyses of the International Committee. Rather, Marxists are obliged to make a concrete study of the experiences in Greece, Portugal, Spain (after Franco's death) etc., to show more precisely the role of Stalinism and social democracy in defending the capitalist state against the movement of the working class. Furthermore, in studying the class struggle in the backward countries, it would be necessary to thoroughly expose the political bankruptcy of Maoism, whose petty-bourgeois line produced bloody defeats and catastrophes.

In Britain, the fact that the Labour government of Wilson-Callaghan (1974-79) was not the last social-democratic regime is not altogether unconnected with the opportunist line pursued by the WRP itself, which rejected the time-honored tactics developed by the Trotskyist movement to expose the reformist agents of imperialism.

Seeking to cover up the crimes of Stalinism and social democracy, as well as to conceal the real content of the WRP's degeneration, Banda offers no concrete analysis. Instead, he prefers to ridicule the very notion that capitalism faces a breakdown and remains to this day in a crisis of historically-unprecedented dimension whose survival is more dependent than ever upon the reactionary labor bureaucracies and their centrist accomplices. Banda seems not to have noticed that during the past decade alone, after the catastrophic recession of 1973-75, capitalism has undergone two additional slumps: that of 1979-80 and 1982-83. The base level of unemployment in the United States and Western Europe has more than doubled during the past 15 years.

In the United States, none of these slumps has been followed by "recoveries" which restored the previous levels of industrial production. The analysis made by the ICFI in the mid-1960s of the crisis of US capitalism has been confirmed by the historic decay of the position of American industry in the world market. Since 1971, the value of the

dollar in relation to the German mark and Japanese yen has fallen by more than one-half. In 1985, the United States became a debtor nation for the first time since 1917, burdened with trade deficits that now exceed one hundred billion dollars a year. In the space of just five years, from 1981 to 1986, the national debt has doubled.

At the present time, world imperialism stands once again on the brink of massive revolutionary upheavals sparked by the worsening economic crisis. The more the industrial foundation of American capitalism deteriorates, the more ruthless becomes its drive to recover lost markets by prosecuting trade warfare. This process must intensify the class struggle in every imperialist country, as the struggle for markets compels the bourgeoisie to intensify the exploitation of "its" working class.

In a parallel process, the hopeless bankruptcy of the indebted backward countries, under constant pressure to meet the terms of the imperialist bankers as a condition for further credit, produces social conditions that leads inevitably to revolutionary confrontations between the national bourgeoisie and the workers and oppressed peasantry. With the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and China, the impact of the capitalist crisis on the degenerated and deformed workers' states must sharpen the conflict between the working class and parasitic bureaucracy.

Behind Banda's attempt to ridicule the economic perspective of the ICFI and his mocking dismissal of the "breakdown" theory is his loss of confidence in the working class and corresponding conviction that capitalism is impregnable. Thus, he dismisses the revolutionary perspective with contempt. It is well known inside the Workers Revolutionary Party that in the last days before his flight to Sri Lanka, in the fall of 1985, Banda was proclaiming to all and sundry that it was impossible to even conceive of a revolutionary situation in Britain for several decades to come. He hit upon the following aphorism: "In America, the principal historical factor is space; in Britain, it is time." Intoxicated by the brilliance of this remark, Banda, shaking his index finger wildly, repeated it several times a day.

Banda would have us believe that he and a few other lonely intellectuals in the WRP waged a grim and hopeless struggle against "Healy's fantasies." He tells us, "Every serious attempt to analyse world economy was frowned upon and the intellectuals were forced to toe the Healyite line: apocalypse now! Cde. Kemp, for one, was virtually driven out of leadership and almost out of the party for dissenting from this viewpoint."

A grave accusation, but one which is untrue. Let us consider the case of one such "frowned-upon" intellectual: Professor Geoffrey Pilling, Senior Lecturer in Economics at Middlesex Polytechnic. In 1980, during one of his long and frequent unauthorized absences from party work, he produced a book entitled *Marx's "Capital": Philosophy and Political Economy*, published by Routledge and Kegan Paul. His departure from active party work was not aimed at escaping from the anti-intellectual tyranny of "lobotomized economics." Pilling's book unequivocally defended the general perspective of the ICFI and its underlying methodology, though Pilling made no explicit reference to his own political affiliations. Instead of acknowledging his intellectual debt to the collective work of the International Committee, he expressed his personal gratitude for "the pleasure and benefit of joint theoretical and political work with Cliff Slaughter, Tom Kemp and Cyril Smith."

This leads us, of course, to the long-suffering Tom Kemp, whom Banda informs us was the lone dissenter, "virtually driven out of leadership and almost out of the party." The record tells a different story. In 1982, Kemp wrote a book *Karl Marx's "Capital" Today*, published by New Park. If he dissented from the economic perspectives of the ICFI, there is no trace of that in this book.

A large portion of this work was devoted to refuting Mandel's claim that there can be no repetition of the type of catastrophic economic crisis that occurred during the Great Depression. In a characteristic passage, Kemp wrote:

In fact capitalism is in a deep historic crisis which is endemic and insoluble. Attempts to deal with it by capitalist governments in resorting once again to inflationary policies have only made it worse by aggravating the contradictions.

The crisis manifests itself within each capitalist country, though in different ways, and in relations between them — trade war, monetary chaos, the free fall of the dollar, the balance of payments deficits of some and the huge surplus of others. These problems have defied all efforts by governments, bankers and industrialists to resolve them. Every summit meeting ends in stalemate leaving the situation worse by further undermining confidence in the system and in its prospects for recovery. To speak about an "upturn" in these circumstances, or to interpret the crisis through the arbitrary patterns of a Kondratiev is to lose all touch with the method of Marxism whatever formal use is made of its categories and its language. The mark of Mandel's revisionism is that he can make no analysis of the overriding crisis and can only repeat parrot-fashion that there will never be a repetition of 1929-1932....

Like earlier revisionists before him, Mandel sees no tendencies dominant in the capitalist mode of production towards its breakdown and collapse.<sup>7</sup>

Kemp concluded his book with the following passage: "While Mandel and his colleagues, the bourgeois and Stalinist economists, study the capitalist mode of production as a going concern, its actual contradictions, laid bare by Marx, are driving it towards slump, war and the socialist revolution."<sup>8</sup>

If this was "dissent" from the perspectives of the International Committee, it was a strange one indeed. In fact, Professor Kemp dissented from Healy only on such issues as the length of his summer vacations in the south of France (Kemp generally insisted on a three-month leave) and the number of hours he was required to devote to party activities.

In order to legitimize his blanket condemnation of the entire history of the International Committee, Banda makes no distinction between the theoretical work that was carried out by the SLL-WRP in the 1960s and early 1970s with what was produced by the British section from the mid-1970s on. Nor does he distinguish between the work (or, more correctly, the non-work) of the WRP in the final stages of its political degeneration and the on-going struggle to analyze the economic crisis within the sections of the International Committee.

A comparison of the perspectives documents written by the Workers League between 1975 and 1985 with those of the WRP would reveal an enormous difference in the caliber of theoretical work. By the 1980s, the WRP had largely abandoned any systematic work on the world capitalist crisis. The Workers League, on the other hand, consistently studied and explained the significance of the deepening crisis of American capitalism and its political reflection in the policies of the Reagan administration. The attention given by the Workers League since 1979 to the international debt crisis and its impact on the US banking system (Penn Square, Seattle First National, Continental Illinois), the trade and budget deficit, and the growth of financial parasitism and the underlying decay of the productive capacities of American capitalism was central to the party's unrelenting struggle to mobilize the American working class on the basis of a revolutionary program.

When Banda denounces the economic perspectives of the ICFI, his target is not the hollow and bombastic formulas which were utilized by the WRP during the period of its death agony. Rather, it is precisely what was correct in the perspective originally developed by the ICFI as a product of the struggle against revisionism: the insoluble character of the world capitalist crisis leading to economic catastrophes and the inevitability of revolutionary struggles by the proletariat in the centers of world imperialism.

# 31

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## A Petty-Bourgeois Nationalist Unmasked

The nauseating collection of distortions and lies produced by Banda under the heading "27 Reasons Why the International Committee Should Be Buried" has one central goal: to discredit and destroy the Trotskyist movement. It is the work of a renegade whose political evolution embodies the protracted degeneration of the Workers Revolutionary Party, from an organization which at one time defended the principles of Trotskyism into a right-centrist appendage of the British social democracy and an apologist for Stalinism and bourgeois nationalism. Especially after the transformation of the Socialist Labour League into the Workers Revolutionary Party, the line of the International Committee's British section systematically abandoned the principled Trotskyist line that it had defended in the struggle against the reunification of the SWP with the Pabloites. This process has been analyzed in depth by the International Committee in its statement, dated June 9, 1986, entitled "How the Workers Revolutionary Party Betrayed Trotskyism 1973-1985."

Banda rejects the position that the content of the WRP's degeneration consisted of its betrayal of the struggle for Trotskyism. On the contrary, he claims that the degeneration of the WRP was the inevitable outcome of its identification with the Trotskyist movement, i.e., the International Committee. For this reason, Banda's response to the crisis within the WRP was to call for the burial of the ICFI.

The most dishonest, and yet politically revealing, of all Banda's declarations is the following:

North and his minions understand nothing about the degeneration of the WRP when they try to ascribe the cause to the abandonment of the theory of Permanent Revolution. The fact is, as I have shown with innumerable references and concrete evidence, that the SLL-WRP and IC never subscribed to it in the first place. In practice they repudiated it.

This was, incidentally, the case in Indo-China too where for years the IC advocated the policy of "Long Live the Vietnamese Revolution — Down with the NLF!" I personally intervened both in the Workers League with Wohlforth and in a bitter struggle both with Healy and Lambert to change the line to "Victory to the NLF!" (Banda's emphasis.)

First, let us dispose of the odious lie about the line of the ICFI and the Workers League on the Vietnamese Revolution. Neither the Workers League nor the IC ever issued the call "Down with the NLF"! This is yet another malicious fabrication.

Banda claims that he was engaged in a struggle which spanned years to convince Healy and Wohlforth to stop shouting, "Down with the NLF." Unfortunately, Banda fails to specify the years in which he waged this struggle. This omission is not unintentional, for a review of the chronology of the war is enough to expose Banda's lie.

The Gulf of Tonkin incident, which was manufactured by President Lyndon Johnson to provide a pretext for a bombing attack against North Vietnam, took place in August 1964. The systematic bombing of North Vietnam was ordered in February 1965 after the mortar attack against the US air base in Pleiku. The decision to substantially expand the use of US ground forces in Vietnam was made in March 1965, and the decision to seek the military defeat of the NLF through a massive commitment of American soldiers was announced by the Johnson administration in late July 1965.

In the February 22, 1965 issue of the *Bulletin of International Socialism*, the American Committee for the Fourth International (ACFI), forerunner of the Workers League, carried a statement which declared, "The struggle



of the National Liberation Front must be defended in every way possible. Essential to this defense and necessary to its ultimate victory, is the long struggle to bring the working class to power in the advanced capitalist countries, especially in the U.S.”

In the July 10, 1965 issue of *Newsletter*, in a statement headlined “Defeat Imperialism in Vietnam!” the central committee of the Socialist Labour League declared, “Every socialist must welcome the successes of the national-liberation fighters in South Vietnam. A victory for these heroic workers and peasants over US imperialism and its puppets will be a major blow against the enemies of the labour movement throughout the world.”

In its issue of July 24, 1965, *Newsletter* emphatically stated:

The role of Marxist parties is to give unconditional support to all liberation movements fighting imperialism.

In the case of Vietnam, workers in every country must mobilize to weaken the imperialist forces and hasten the victory of the Vietcong.

The campaign for unconditional class support for the Vietnamese revolution in opposition to all the opportunists, Stalinists and revisionists is the first necessity for the construction of parties of the Fourth International in every country.

The Trotskyists are the severest critics of the leaderships of these colonial movements because we are also the most loyal defenders of the anti-imperialist revolution.

Today, there is a danger that the successful war being led by the Vietcong can be isolated and undermined and the fruits of victory plucked by alien hands.

Thus, the call by American Trotskyists for the victory of the NLF came more than a year and a half before the founding of the Workers League. The Socialist Labour League issued the call for the victory of the NLF from the earliest days of the war against US imperialism. There exists absolutely no factual record which Banda can cite to substantiate his allegation against the ICFI and the Workers League.

As for Banda’s attempt to dismiss the ICFI’s charge that the degeneration of the WRP was bound up with its abandonment of the theory of permanent revolution, it is best

answered by examining the political manifestation of the British section's drift away from the principles that it had defended in the early 1960s and the role played by Banda in that process. From 1967 on, he took the lead in revising and attacking the theoretical foundations of Trotskyism. Banda's present claim that "the SLL-WRP and the IC never subscribed" to the theory of permanent revolution is not only a lie. It is an attempt to cover up the fact that Banda's own conception of this theory, from at least the mid-1960s, had absolutely nothing in common with that advanced by Trotsky.

In the late 1960s, Banda's writings on Vietnam, China and the revolutionary movements in the backward countries in general rejected two central tenets of the theory of permanent revolution: (1) that the democratic revolution in the backward countries can be completed only through the dictatorship of the proletariat, and (2) that the establishment of a socialist society is inconceivable without the worldwide overthrow of capitalism by the international proletariat. Banda's writings assumed the character of an apology for the colonial bourgeoisie and an acceptance of the Stalinist two-stage theory of revolution.

Anticipating all the various national movements and tendencies which, regardless of their episodic differences with the Soviet bureaucracy, still derive, in the last analysis, their political line from the Stalinist perspective of "socialism in a single country," Trotsky wrote:

To aim at building a *nationally isolated* socialist society means, in spite of all passing successes, to pull the productive forces backward even as compared with capitalism. To attempt, regardless of the geographical, cultural and historical conditions of the country's development, which constitutes a part of the world unity, to realize a shut-off proportionality of all the branches of economy within a national framework, means to pursue a reactionary utopia. If the heralds and supporters of this theory nevertheless participate in the international revolutionary struggle (with what success is a different question) it is because, as hopeless eclectics, they mechanically combine abstract internationalism with reactionary utopian national socialism.<sup>1</sup>

Enthralled by the military audacity of the NLF and the radicalism of the Cultural Revolution, Banda placed diminished emphasis on this decisive internationalist criteria in evaluating the policies of Mao Tse-tung and Ho Chi Minh. This led to an exaggeration of the extent of their supposed differences with the essential premises of Stalinism and to an outright capitulation to their policies. Banda's lyrical tributes to the courage of the NLF fighters were increasingly tainted by an uncritical and apologetic attitude toward the political line and history of the North Vietnamese leadership. After protests made by the Organisation Communiste Internationalist (OCI), which was then the French section of the ICFI, the editors of *Fourth International* magazine were forced to publicly disavow an editorial written by Banda in the February 1968 issue, which virtually proclaimed the NLF to be the reincarnation of the Bolshevik Party.

During the same period, Banda's enthusiastic declamations in support of the Red Guards, despite the use of the term "critical," were characterized by unwarranted and dangerous concessions to the perspectives underlying Mao's "Cultural Revolution." In January 1967, Banda eulogized Mao as the leader of the Chinese proletariat in the struggle against bureaucracy: "The best elements led by Mao and Lin Piao have been forced to go *outside* the framework of the Party and call on the youth and the working class to intervene.

*"For the first time since 1926 the working class in China has intervened as an independent force. This is the real significance of recent events in Peking, Shanghai and Nanking."* <sup>2</sup> (Banda's emphasis.)

In a speech delivered that same January in London, Banda depicted the political struggle raging within the Chinese bureaucracy in terms which accepted Mao's claims at face value:

The fight in China today is between those sections representing the pressure of imperialism bearing down on the Chinese state and party; those who want to call a halt to the Chinese Revolution, who do not want to go any further; who are satisfied with the privileges and salaries they have; who are contemptuous of the working class inside

and outside China and who want to impose their policy on the Chinese Party and the Chinese state.

They don't want any "flowers to bloom" or any schools of thought to contend....

The Mao leadership with the support of the Red Guards is fighting against this group under the banner of "egalitarianism."

They are fighting against privilege, against autocratic powers, for democracy in China; for the right to criticise and to act on the criticisms; the right to tell the judges, the police and the ministers what the people really think about their policies and to throw them out if they don't mend their ways.<sup>3</sup>

Banda's analysis represented a dangerous manifestation of the method of Pabloite revisionism in the leadership of the British section of the ICFI. Banda assigned to Mao the same sort of role previously assigned by Hansen to Castro: the unconscious, or, at best, semiconscious substitute for the Fourth International. While Castro was anointed leader of the socialist revolution in Cuba, Banda more or less proclaimed Mao the leader of the political revolution in China: "The Chinese Communist Party (which was the creation of Mao Tse Tung), the Chinese trade unions, the Chinese youth movement, all these organisations have degenerated to a point beyond redemption. That is why Mao had to set loose the Red Guards."<sup>4</sup>

It is impossible to believe that Banda did not realize that his claim that Mao created the CCP was factually wrong. Rather, one must conclude that he was quite deliberately ignoring the history of the Chinese Communist Party between 1921 and 1927, the crucial formative years which are a necessary foundation for a Marxist study of its political evolution. To claim that Mao created the CCP was simply to deny that Mao's leadership was itself a creation of Stalin's betrayal of the Chinese Revolution in 1925-27.

There was an even more dangerous distortion of Trotskyism in Banda's speech. Referring to Trotsky's prophetic article, "Peasant War in China and the Proletariat," Banda declared:

As far back as 1932, Trotsky, in a letter which he wrote to the Chinese supporters of the Left Opposition, told them

that if the Chinese Communist Party was to seize the power in China then very soon it would be faced with a new conflict because the Chinese Communist Party, being largely based on the peasantry, would attract to it many people in the course of the national-democratic revolution who were not really communists but petty-bourgeois democrats.

He wrote that sooner or later a crisis would erupt between the working class wing of the Communist Party and the bureaucratic and peasant wing of the Communist Party and lead to a supplementary revolution in China....

What is happening in China today is in many respects a fulfillment of Trotsky's predictions.<sup>5</sup>

This was a falsification of what Trotsky had written. While Banda cited the 1932 letter in order to justify critical support to Mao as the leader of a proletarian tendency, suggesting in true Pabloite style that he was carrying out the political testament of Trotsky, "Peasant War in China and the Proletariat" was in fact a devastating indictment of the entire political line pursued by the CCP under the leadership of Mao.

Drawing on the rich legacy of Russian Marxism's struggle against Narodnikism (peasant populism), Trotsky emphatically rejected the conception that the peasantry could constitute the principal social base of a genuine communist party. A genuine communist party must be, first and foremost, the vanguard of the urban proletariat. He graphically described the social process whereby "communist" revolutionists, cut off from the urban proletariat and leading peasant armies, would become transformed into leaders of a popular force hostile to the working class. Trotsky explained that the basic social antagonisms between the proletariat and peasantry cannot be overcome simply because the peasant army calls itself "Red" and is led by people who consider themselves Marxists.

Trotsky noted the connection between the Stalinists' retreat into the countryside after 1927-28 and their previous subordination of the proletariat to the national bourgeoisie between 1925-27. Regardless of the episodic successes of the Red Army, he refused to accept as legitimate the Stalinists' attempt to substitute the peasantry for the proletariat as the social foundation of the revolutionary socialist movement.

Moreover, contrary to what Banda says, in considering the consequences of the victory of the peasant army, Trotsky did not speak of a conflict between the "working-class wing" of the CCP and its peasant and bureaucratic wing. That was an invention of Banda who was attempting to portray Mao as the leader of the proletarian elements inside the CCP. What Trotsky really spoke of was the danger that the peasant-based CCP could be transformed into an open enemy of the proletariat, inciting the peasantry against the Marxist vanguard represented by the Chinese Trotskyists.

Although this letter was written before his definitive break with the Third International in 1933 after the defeat of the German working class, Trotsky made clear that the interests of the Chinese proletariat could be consistently defended only through the development of the faction of Bolshevik-Leninists, the supporters of the International Left Opposition (precursor of the Fourth International).

Making a superficial and false differentiation between Mao and the consequences of the class line which the CCP had pursued during the previous 40 years, Banda ignored all those features of the Cultural Revolution which, based on Mao's non-Marxist conception of peasant-based socialism, were reactionary. The dispersion of sections of the proletariat into the countryside, the glorification of the village over the city, the attacks on science, culture and virtually all forms of intellectual activity had nothing in common with Marxism, but reflected the provincialism of the peasantry. Ultimately, the Cultural Revolution brought China to the brink of complete economic collapse, and led directly to Mao's frantic turn, in 1971, toward an accommodation with American imperialism.

But the most terrible consequences of Maoist "theory" were realized in the policies of the Khmer Rouge in Kampuchea. The peasant army's entry into Phnom Penh in 1975 produced a catastrophe. As Trotsky had warned might happen in such a situation, the peasant army looked upon the entire urban population, including the working class, as its enemy. From this reactionary outlook, followed the terrible evacuation from the capital and the massive loss of life.

The extent of Banda's illusions in the leadership of Mao Tse-tung was exposed in his declaration, "The dialectic of history is inexorably transforming the 'cultural revolution' into a political one."<sup>6</sup>

In the interests of preserving unity in the leadership and advancing the practical work in Britain, Healy avoided any clash with Banda over his Pabloite approach to the problems of the Chinese Revolution. This was already a political retreat from the theoretical responsibilities that had been assumed by the British Trotskyists in the course of their struggle against the SWP. Moreover, Healy's laissez-faire attitude toward Banda's views inevitably weakened the class line of the British section. His uncritical attitude toward Ho Chi Minh and Mao Tse-tung mirrored the views of wide layers of intellectuals whose skepticism in the revolutionary capacities of the proletariat went hand in hand with an infatuation with the successes of "people's war" based on the peasantry.

This political romanticism attracted a growing audience during the late 1960s as a result of the radicalization of large sections of the petty bourgeoisie in response to the deepening economic and political crises of imperialism. Healy's avoidance of any political conflict with Banda on these questions of revolutionary perspective amounted to a political capitulation to these petty bourgeois elements and had dire consequences. The numerical growth of the Socialist Labour League was based largely upon the influx of middle-class elements, and the compromises within the leadership meant that the new forces could not be trained on the basis of the theoretical and political lessons of the struggle against Pabloism. Thus, the physical growth of the organization was not accompanied by a further development of Trotskyist cadre. Rather, the Socialist Labour League began to evolve into a centrist organization, repeating, in somewhat different form and under different objective conditions, the political process that had led to the disintegration of the Socialist Workers Party several years earlier.

Banda's capitulation to the nationalist outlook of Mao and Ho was accompanied by a full-scale revision of the Trotskyist attitude toward the national bourgeoisie in a backward country. Having glorified the revolutionary potential of

peasant war at the expense of proletarian revolution, he embraced the view that the national bourgeoisie of a backward country could play a progressive role in the anti-imperialist struggle and must be supported. This line was the logical extension of Stalin-Mao theory, whose opportunist attitude toward the peasantry is but one element of its separation of the national-democratic struggle from the revolutionary-socialist struggle.

The outbreak of the Arab-Israeli war in June 1967 became the occasion for Banda's explicit repudiation of the theory of permanent revolution. In contrast to the French OCI, which adopted a position of neutrality in the war, the Socialist Labour League identified the conflict as one between an oppressor nation and several oppressed nations, and correctly called for the defeat of the Zionist armies. However, in the writings of Banda, the defense of nations oppressed by imperialism was converted into political support for their bourgeois regimes. Rejecting all that Trotsky had written on this question and forgetting everything that the SLL itself had written just a few years earlier, Banda attributed to the Arab bourgeoisie a progressive role in the struggle against imperialism and insisted on the subordination of the proletariat to its leadership.

Attempting to transform Trotskyism into a theoretical defense of the hegemony of the national bourgeoisie, the *Newsletter* declared on July 8, 1967:

Nowhere did Trotsky ever suggest that since the underdeveloped countries are faced with the tasks of the belated bourgeois-democratic revolution they must or can avoid the bourgeois-democratic phase of the revolution and rush straight to its socialist-proletarian phase. Such a distortion has more in common with the Immaculate Conception than with Marxism.

The backward countries of the world remain backward because they are oppressed and exploited by imperialism. This is nowhere more true than in the Arab world. Despite formal political independence, 80 million Arabs remain under the heel of imperialism. This is the mainspring of the Arab revolution which is not a socialist revolution, but is a bourgeois-nationalist and democratic one.



This revolution will — to use an expression of Lenin's — “grow over” into the socialist revolution only to the extent that it comes under proletarian leadership.

*But before the proletariat can aspire to leadership, it must consistently and unequivocally support the demands of the national revolution and in particular the demand for the unity and the complete independence of the Arab nation.*

To refuse to do so because Nasser or Aref, or even Hussein, from time to time voice these demands would be to incarcerate the Marxist movement in sectarian isolation. (Emphasis added.)

Repeating the old sophistries of the Stalinists, Banda deduced from the democratic tasks confronting the Egyptian masses a progressive role for the Egyptian (and Arab) bourgeoisie. His abstract reference “to the demands of the national revolution” excluded the existence of powerful class contradictions within the oppressed Arab nations (especially Egypt) and amounted to a demand that the proletariat accept the tutelage of the national bourgeoisie in the anti-imperialist struggle. Moreover, his categorical denial of any socialist (anticapitalist) dynamic in the anti-imperialist struggle was the equivalent of illegalizing any independent action by the proletariat against the bourgeoisie, in the name of “anti-imperialist national unity.”

And yet the central axiom of the theory of permanent revolution is that the revolutionary energy necessary to destroy the domination of imperialism over the backward country is generated by the *internal* class struggle of the proletariat against the national bourgeoisie. The anti-imperialist struggle can never be victorious until the proletariat has, in the course of bitter class struggle, established its complete independence from the national bourgeoisie and mobilized behind itself the millions of oppressed peasants.

Banda's eulogy of Nasser in his “27 Reasons” as the symbol of Arab unity merely provides up-to-date evidence that his own political evolution was that of a left bourgeois nationalist. In this sense, the biography of Banda-Van Der Poorten mirrors that of many bourgeois youth of his generation from the colonial countries. Initially, their disgust with the impotence of the national bourgeoisie in the backward

countries led them toward the working class and Marxism. However, their relation with the proletariat remained tenuous and was disrupted once imperialism proved willing to make an accommodation with the national bourgeoisie. They interpreted these concessions as proof that the national bourgeoisie did have a progressive role to play, not as calculated retreats by imperialism aimed at preventing its complete expropriation by the revolutionary proletariat. It is ironic that Banda has succumbed to the same political illusions and class pressures that destroyed the revolutionary leaders he had idolized as a youth. In his native Sri Lanka, the granting of independence in 1947 began the process of reformist conditioning that ended with the LSSP's break with Trotskyism and its transformation into a reformist prop of native bourgeois rule.

If one considers the development of Banda as a whole, his "Trotskyism" proves to have been only the surface coloring of a petty-bourgeois radicalism that stopped far short of a truly proletarian outlook. He never assimilated the essence of the theory of permanent revolution: that the national liberation of the masses of the backward country can be achieved only through the leadership of the proletariat and its Marxist party. Whereas the Trotskyist always looks to the working class to resolve the fundamental problems of social development and is at all times preoccupied with the task of building a leadership within the working class, Banda was frequently swayed from the proletarian moorings of the International Committee by the ephemeral radicalism of various "left" bourgeois nationalists, especially when they resorted to armed struggle. The more discouraged Banda became by the protracted character of the struggle for the development of revolutionary consciousness in the European and North American proletariat, the more susceptible he became to the spectacular development of the nationalist movements in the backward countries.

There was yet another side to Banda's rejection of the revolutionary role of the proletariat. He supported the "right" of the bourgeoisie in the backward countries to defend the state boundaries. While Banda now has the audacity to claim that the ICFI never accepted the theory of permanent

revolution, his opportunist adaptation to the Indian bourgeoisie during the Indo-Pak War of 1971 came under direct attack from the Sri Lankan section of the International Committee, the Revolutionary Communist League.

This dispute is of enormous significance, not only because it answers Banda's lying claim that the ICFI never supported the theory of permanent revolution. It brings to light the fundamental contradiction in the relationship of the SLL-WRP to the International Committee. The struggle waged by the Socialist Labour League against Pabloism won the support of Trotskyists all over the world. The documents written by Slaughter in 1961-64 in defense of the theory of permanent revolution provided the theoretical foundation for the education of a new generation of revolutionaries. The founding of the Workers League in the United States and the Revolutionary Communist League in Sri Lanka were the direct product of the struggle against Pabloism, and their cadre were developed on the basis of the theoretical lessons drawn from that fight. This was the political source of internal conflict within the ICFI. While it is convenient for Banda to depict the ICFI as an abstract unity of all sections, the drift of the Healy-Banda-Slaughter leadership to the right revealed the sharp differences which existed inside the International Committee.

In March 1971, the Pakistani army invaded East Pakistan and initiated a genocidal carnage in a desperate attempt to prevent the creation of the independent state of Bangladesh. By the autumn of that year, Bengali resistance, led by the radical Mukti Bahini, had drastically weakened the Pakistani army. Anticipating the imminent collapse of the Pakistani army and fearing the establishment of a Bengali state under radical leadership, the government of Indira Gandhi decided to intervene with troops in East Pakistan.

The intervention of the Indian army was enthusiastically endorsed by Banda. Without any discussion inside the International Committee, Banda wrote a statement supporting the Indian bourgeoisie that was published in the name of the ICFI. It declared: "We critically support the decision of the Indian bourgeois government to give military and economic aid to Bangla Desh. We condemn the attempt of

US imperialism to stop the conflict through UN intervention and the threatened cessation of economic aid to India."<sup>7</sup>

While formally acknowledging "the reactionary nature of the Indian bourgeoisie," Banda insisted on the right of Gandhi to intervene in Bangladesh and made absolutely no reference to the independent tasks of the Indian proletariat.

The statement of the Revolutionary Communist League, Sri Lankan section of the ICFI, was diametrically opposed to that produced by Banda with the approval of Healy and Slaughter. It called upon the proletariat of Pakistan and India to oppose the military actions of their own ruling class:

Precisely because the Trotskyists stand unconditionally and unequivocally for the struggle for Bangladesh, they stand for the defeat of the Pakistan army at the hands of the Mukti Bahini forces. We declare that the task of the proletariat in Pakistan is to link its fate with that of the struggle for Bangladesh and to fight for the defeat of "their own" army. The Pakistani proletariat, in the finest traditions of proletarian internationalism, should take the Leninist position of revolutionary defeatism, because the war waged by the Pakistani ruling class is a war for national oppression, in the interests of the imperialist status quo.

At the same time we demarcate ourselves clearly and sharply from all those who cover up the annexationist and counter revolutionary aims of the war waged by the Indians — in the East as well as the West, by their ostensible support for the Bangladesh movement. We call upon the Indian proletariat to reject the claim of the Indian bourgeoisie to be the liberators of E. Bengal. The Trotskyists declare that the Indian armed intervention in E. Bengal had one and only one object. It was to prevent the struggle for Bangladesh from developing into a struggle for the unification, on a revolutionary basis, of the whole of Bengal. The Indian armed intervention was designed to smash the revolutionary Bengali liberation struggle, to crush the upsurge of the masses in Bengal and to install a puppet regime which, fraudulently usurping the name of the government of Bangladesh, would confine and contain the mass movement in the interests of the bourgeoisie and imperialism. Thus we call upon the Indian proletariat too to take a position of revolutionary defeatism in relation to the counterrevolutionary war of the Indian bourgeoisie,

while supporting by all and every means the struggle of the Mukti Bahini.<sup>8</sup>

The secretary of the RCL, Keerthi Balasuriya, wrote a letter to Cliff Slaughter on December 16, 1971 protesting the line taken by the British section in the name of the International Committee:

India's war against Pakistan is not a liberation war. The aim of this intervention is to establish a dictatorship within India itself, well equipped to suppress the national and working class struggles. Indira Gandhi, while shouting about the repression carried out by Khan, has suppressed all the democratic rights of the Indian working class and the oppressed masses through emergency (rule) and attempts to annex Kashmir and E. Bengal to India.

It is not possible to support the national liberation struggle of the Bengali people and the voluntary unification of India on socialist foundations without opposing the Indo-Pakistan war. Without opposing the war from within India and Pakistan, it is completely absurd to talk about a unified socialist India which alone can safeguard the right of self-determination of the many nations in the Indian subcontinent.

Without taking a principled position in relation to the war between Pakistan and India, the IC statement critically supported "certain decisions" of the Indian government. This position cannot be supported in India or anywhere else in the world. Should the Indian working class support this war or not? Without answering this question how can a section of the IC be built in India? The meaning of opposing the war waged by Indira Gandhi is that the Indian working class should be mobilized independently to overthrow and replace the Gandhi government with a workers' and peasants' government. Only by taking this revolutionary defeatist line can the revolutionaries fight for the freedom of Bengal and the socialist unification of India.<sup>9</sup>

The revolutionary position of the RCL enraged Banda. In a letter to Balasuriya dated January 27, 1972, he justified the line of the SLL with a position which amounted to a craven defense of the class interests of the Indian bourgeoisie. Banda declared, citing an article written by the American bourgeois muckraker Jack Anderson, that Gandhi's military intervention was justified because it was necessary to protect "the

already restricted home market of the Indian bourgeoisie" — as if the political line of the proletariat was to be subordinated to the hopeless efforts of the bourgeoisie in a backward country to defend its feeble capitalist economy against the pressure of imperialism.

Even more remarkable was Banda's claim that the outbreak of war between India and Pakistan created a "dramatic change" in the political situation: "The contradiction between the Indian working class and the Indian capitalists did not cease. No, but it was superseded by the conflict between the Indian *nation* and imperialism represented by Pakistan."<sup>10</sup> (Banda's emphasis.)

With these lines, Banda completely renounced Marxism. To claim that a war between oppressed and oppressor nations (which, at any rate, was not the issue in the 1971 Indo-Pak War) supersedes the class struggle inside the oppressed nation itself is to adopt the line of Menshevism and Stalinism. Taken to its logical conclusion, Banda's position was an argument for the cessation of the class struggle and for the formation of a popular front alliance between the working class and the national bourgeoisie. Banda's line mimicked that of those whom Trotsky denounced in 1927 as "woeful philistines and sycophants" who believe that national liberation "can be achieved by moderating the class struggle, by curbing strikes and agrarian uprisings, by abandoning the arming of the masses, etc."<sup>11</sup>

This political record shows two things. First, within the ICFI, those who based themselves on the legacy of the struggle against Pabloite revisionism defended the theory of permanent revolution while it was being discarded by the leadership of the Workers Revolutionary Party; and, second, the inspirer of the theory of the revolutionary role of the national bourgeoisie, which led in the mid-1970s to Healy's unprincipled and mercenary relations with the Arab bourgeoisie, was Michael Banda. Healy's activities in the Middle East went unchallenged within the WRP because Banda had already provided a theoretical justification for the most unrestrained opportunism. Thus, when Banda declared in early November 1985 that his split with Healy was not based

on differences of a programmatic character, he was, for once, telling the truth.

Indeed, Healy's operations in the Middle East were no worse than the positions adopted by Banda. In 1978, at a time when Healy was justifying the murder of Communist Party members in Iraq by the Ba'athist regime, Banda was denouncing the Australian section of the ICFI, the Socialist Labour League, for having defended the right of East Timor to self-determination. Banda declared that the invasion of East Timor by the armies of the Indonesian dictator, General Suharto, which led to the slaughter of thousands of workers and peasants, was a justifiable act aimed at preserving the unity of Indonesia! This so-called expert on the theory of permanent revolution had degenerated into a reactionary nationalist whose principal political concern was the defense of bourgeois state boundaries.

That such a man occupied the position of general secretary of the Workers Revolutionary Party testified to the depth of the organization's political putrefaction.

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## The Wohlforth Incident

We are approaching the conclusion of our analysis of “27 Reasons,” which — the author would be the first to admit — has gone on quite a bit longer than he either intended or expected. But, if the author may be permitted to speak in his own defense, autopsies can sometimes be messy and arduous affairs, especially when the corpse arrives in a state of advanced decomposition. And this was certainly the case with Michael (Van Der Poorten) Banda, who, as he finally admitted in “27 Reasons,” had completed his inner break with Trotskyism at least a decade before he actually wrote the document.

In keeping with the opportunist relations which prevailed inside the leadership of the Workers Revolutionary Party, Healy sought desperately to suppress political discussions within the International Committee that would uncover the political demise of his longtime protege. One of the main uses of Healy’s “practice of cognition” was to preempt the concrete theoretical analysis of program and perspective with mystical and pseudoscientific excursions into the realm of “pure thought.” This allowed Healy to engage in furious mock-battles over the “correct” sequence of logical categories in the unfolding of the “Absolute Idea,” while keeping his mouth shut about Banda’s skepticism and mounting hostility toward all the fundamental conceptions of Trotskyism. Toward the end, Healy’s efforts to sustain the image of Banda as a revolutionary assumed a pathetic and somewhat comic dimension: he insisted that party members greet the



approach of the “comrade general secretary” to the speaker’s platform at public meetings with a standing ovation!

And despite the split inside the WRP, Healy could still write, some eight months after the publication of “27 Reasons,” that for 35 years Banda — unlike the terrible North — “contributed in a powerful practical way to building the Workers Revolutionary Party and the ICFI, in the best traditions of historical materialism.”<sup>1</sup> For reasons bound up with his own political degeneration, Healy has explicitly denied that Banda’s break with Trotskyism was prepared over many years.

In place of a concrete political analysis of Banda’s record of opposition to the theory of permanent revolution, his adaptation to Maoism and his promotion of bourgeois nationalist views, Healy has taken refuge in a thoroughly idealist-mystical distortion of the real political process. Banda’s evolution, he tells us, is that of a “Fichtean subjective idealist.” For the benefit of those who are not among the specially initiated, allow us to explain that Fichte lived from 1762 until 1814. Nevertheless, Healy seeks to substantiate his astonishing diagnosis by referring his readers to the following passage by Hegel, which supposedly “explains” the fate of Michael Banda:

“The infinite limitation or check of Fichte’s idealism refuses, perhaps, to be based on any Thing-in-itself, so that it becomes purely a determinateness in the Ego....

“But this determinateness is *immediate* and a *limit* to the Ego, which transcending its externality, incorporates it; and though the Ego can pass beyond the limit, the latter has in it an aspect of indifference by virtue of which it contains an immediate *not-being* of the Ego, though itself contained in the Ego.”<sup>2</sup>

Elementary, my dear Watson. But for those who are still somewhat unclear as to the connection between Fichte’s Ego and Banda’s anti-Trotskyism, Healy illuminates the argument in the following manner. Men such as Banda, he tells us, “fail to realize ... that these *empty word forms* contain a *content of ‘Not-Being’* — the ever-changing world economic and political crisis, whether they are aware of it or not. The build-up of such countless *‘not-beings’* have their revenge

when the multitude of 'empty word forms' without them being able to recognize their 'not-Being' content blow up in their face, leaving them totally unprepared."<sup>3</sup>

Thus, Healy discovers the source of Banda's betrayals in ... *The Revenge of the Not-Beings*, which perhaps will be turned into a cinematic adventure by his last and most faithful disciples, Vanessa (OBE) and Corin Redgrave, at some point, let us hope, in the very distant future.

We must now, alas, take our leave of Healy's make-believe world of Fichtean Egos, empty word forms and Not-beings in order to deal with another of Banda's falsifications. Attempting to attack the Workers League and discredit its struggle to defend the perspective of Trotskyism within the International Committee, Banda rewrites history in order to claim that the present leadership of the Workers League is the product of an unprincipled witch-hunt against its former national secretary, Tim Wohlforth. This is the explanation which he gives of the desertion of Wohlforth from the Workers League in September 1974:

The crisis with Wohlforth was artificially exacerbated by Healy with his paranoid ravings about security and his total failure to deal with the Workers League's problems of perspective and policy. The issue of Nancy Fields was exaggerated and distorted beyond all proportion. In my opinion Wohlforth's weaknesses were maliciously exploited by Healy to drive him out. As a point of information it is necessary to correct the impression that it was Dave North's leadership that fought Wohlforth. This is a tax on my credibility. The entire "struggle" was conducted by the leaders of the WRP with tactical help from the WL. The case of Nancy Fields must be re-examined in the same way as Thornett, Blick and other victims of Healy's malice and bureaucratic sadism.

Despite the belated claims by the Slaughter wing of the WRP that it disagrees with Banda's "27 Reasons" — though it did not hesitate to base its split with the International Committee upon this very document — it has also embraced the cause of Wohlforth and Fields as a central element of its "case" against the Workers League and the International Committee.

In the *Workers Press* of October 18, 1986, Geoff Pilling, who fervently defended Healy against the criticisms raised by the Workers League between 1982 and 1984, wrote that David North fears an examination of "the question of Tim Wohlforth." The entire membership of the WRP is now being led to believe by Pilling and Cliff Slaughter that Wohlforth was, as claimed by Banda, some sort of "victim." In an internal document, dated October 1986, the International Commission of the WRP informed its members that it was sending a representative to San Francisco "so that we can begin to get a general picture of developments with Tim Wohlforth, if possible. His bureaucratic removal from the Workers League by Healy, later ably assisted [by] North, is something we have to take full responsibility for."<sup>4</sup>

Who, then, is Tim Wohlforth, and what became of him? In the early 1960s, he played a central role in the struggle against the Pabloite degeneration of the Socialist Workers Party and, collaborating closely with the International Committee, formed the American Committee for the Fourth International in 1964 after he and eight other SWP members were expelled for having insisted on a discussion of the LSSP's betrayal in Ceylon. In 1966, upon the founding of the Workers League, he became its first national secretary.

No one in the Workers League would deny the contribution made by Wohlforth in the early years of the organization. However, the breakup of the middle-class antiwar protest movement in the early 1970s, to which much of the practical activity of the Workers League during its early years had been oriented, threw Wohlforth into a deep political crisis. In 1972 Wohlforth came under sharp and correct criticism within the International Committee for weakening the Workers League's long-standing programmatic orientation to the working class, through the fight for the formation of a Labor Party based on the trade unions.

Looking for something to replace the waning antiwar movement, and reacting impressionistically to the events surrounding the September 1971 uprising at Attica prison, Wohlforth decided to focus the party's work on the political radicalization of prison inmates. For weeks on end, the pages of the party's press were turned over to publishing letters

from prisoners, and Wohlforth developed the theory that the penitentiaries were becoming the main centers for the development of Marxism! Wohlforth directed that an "Open Letter to Prisoners" be published in the *Bulletin*, which contained the following passage (dictated by Wohlforth to the letter's ostensible author, Lucy St. John):

Many of the cadres of the Bolshevik Party were prepared and educated within the prisons. After 1905 and before 1917 the prisons became a center for the development of political consciousness....

So too today the prisons have become a center of the development of political consciousness. A new generation of revolutionary leaders can be developed and come out of the Tombs of today. <sup>5</sup>

Notwithstanding the fact that the existence of a vast prison population is the product of social conditions created by capitalism, it was a theoretical travesty, not to mention a political insult, to compare the leaders of the Russian Revolution, incarcerated because of their conscious struggle against czarist oppression, to the inmates of American prisons. That such a line could be advanced in the pages of the *Bulletin* expressed Wohlforth's deep political disorientation and his turn away from the working class.

However, Wohlforth's political problems were exacerbated by the opportunist manner in which the Socialist Labour League carried through the split with the French OCI. The refusal of the SLL to deepen the theoretical and political questions relating to its differences with the OCI, as it had just one decade earlier during the practical struggle with the SWP, contributed to the disorientation of the International Committee and the Workers League. The criticisms of Wohlforth at the Fourth Congress of the ICFI in April 1972 were substantially correct and justified, but were made within the context of the precipitous split with the OCI and the growing political disorientation with the SLL itself.

While adapting himself to the immediate criticisms of the International Committee, Wohlforth continued his petty-bourgeois orientation. In early 1973, despite objections raised on the Workers League Political Committee, Wohlforth proposed inviting leaders of the Spartacist League to publicly

debate the history of the Fourth International. This initiative, taken without consulting the International Committee, represented a turn back to the milieu of middle-class radicalism then epitomized by the Spartacist League. The final stage in the formation of the Workers League, consummating its five-year struggle against SWP revisionism, was the irrevocable break made by its founding cadre with the Spartacist group led by James Robertson. To publicly invite this group, seven years later, to engage in debates on the history of the Fourth International could only mean, as Wohlforth's subsequent evolution proved, to call the finality of that break into question.

After these debates were criticized by Healy with his characteristic bluntness, Wohlforth lost whatever was left of his political equilibrium and initiated a political wrecking operation inside the Workers League which, within the space of one year, nearly destroyed the entire organization. The beginning of these violent and unstable activities coincided with the initiation, in the summer of 1973, of an intimate personal relationship with a woman by the name of Nancy Fields. This woman, who was soon exercising enormous influence over Wohlforth, was promoted into the party leadership. Ignorant of Marxism and contemptuous of the working class, Fields made use of her position, which was based entirely on her personal ties to Wohlforth, to initiate a pogrom against the Workers League cadre.

Slaughter and Pilling, who know all the facts about Fields's brutal, violent and destructive actions against party members, now join Banda in defending her against the Workers League. Spending thousands of dollars of party funds without authorization, Wohlforth and Fields traveled around the country in luxury, while closing down party branches and expelling members. Fields employed the most vile means to force cadre out of the Workers League: in one instance, she demanded that a member, five-months pregnant, undergo an abortion! Slaughter and Pilling are familiar with this incident and many others like it. But this does not prevent these latter-day champions of "revolutionary morality" from ardently pleading her case before the abysmally ignorant WRP membership.

To give an idea of the impact upon the Workers League of Fields's year-long rampage, let us quote from a letter written by Wohlforth to Healy on July 19, 1974, little more than two months before his desertion from the party:

"In answer to the question about your coming to our camp and conference let me just give you some information on the League. It has been going through a very remarkable period. I have figured that since 'X' left about a year and a half ago, some 100 people have left the League. *This figure refers only to people in the party for some time and playing important roles, not those who drift in and out, the usual sorting out of membership.* The bulk of these people left in the period of the preparation for and since the summer camp last year which was the decisive turning point in the history of the League.

*Even this figure does not show the full impact of the process. Almost half of those who left were from New York City. Almost half the National Committee and Political Committee were involved. Virtually the entire original youth leadership were also involved....*

We are, of course, very much of a skeletal movement these days with very good work carried on by very, very few people in many areas. *We are virtually wiped out as far as intellectuals are concerned — one big bastardly desertion. What is done on this front I have to do along with Nancy. We have nothing more in the universities — and I mean nothing.* The party is extremely weak on education and theoretical matters....

As far as the trade unions are concerned our old, basically centrist work in the trade unions, especially SSEU, has collapsed precisely because of our struggle to change its character and turn to the youth.<sup>76</sup> (Emphasis added.)

Thus, according to Wohlforth's own balance sheet, in the course of one year, the Workers League had lost more than 100 cadre, half the membership of its National and Political Committees, its entire original youth leadership, and virtually all of its intellectuals. On top of that, its trade union work had collapsed. In other words, by the summer of 1974, Wohlforth and Fields had almost succeeded in liquidating the Workers League. This accounts for the esteem in which they are both held to this day by all the enemies of the Trotskyist movement.

Now let us deal with Banda's claim, seconded by Slaughter and Pilling, that "the issue of Nancy Fields was exaggerated and distorted beyond all proportion."

In May 1974, having become Wohlforth's inseparable traveling companion, Fields was selected by him to attend the Fifth World Congress of the International Committee in May 1974. In attendance were delegates from countries such as Spain, where revolutionary work was being conducted in conditions of illegality.

In August 1974, not long after the above-quoted letter arrived in Britain, Wohlforth was invited by Healy to visit London to discuss the crisis which had developed inside the Workers League. In the course of these discussions, Wohlforth was asked about Nancy Fields. Prior to her attendance at the Fifth World Congress, she had been unknown to the International Committee. Noting the crisis inside the Workers League and Fields's meteoric and unexplained rise to authority, Healy, in the presence of the WRP Political Committee, asked if Wohlforth had any reason to suspect that Fields might be connected to the Central Intelligence Agency. Wohlforth replied that he did not.

But within two weeks, what remained of the Central Committee of the Workers League received astonishing information that placed the activities of Nancy Fields in an entirely new light. She had been raised and financially supported since childhood by her uncle, Albert Morris, a high-level operative of the Central Intelligence Agency and a close friend of its one-time director, the notorious Richard Helms ("The Man Who Kept the Secrets"). Wohlforth had known about Fields's family connections to leading CIA personnel, but had failed to inform either the International Committee or the Workers League Central Committee. When asked to give an explanation for his failure to inform his own party about Fields's background, he said that he did not think it was important.

This was a clear breach of the political security of the revolutionary movement and Wohlforth's responsibility to both the Workers League and the International Committee. The Workers League Central Committee acted accordingly. It removed Tim Wohlforth from the position of National

Secretary (but not from any leading body of the party) and suspended Nancy Fields from membership pending an investigation by an International Commission into her background and this breach in the security of the Workers League. This resolution was adopted unanimously, with both Wohlforth and Fields voting in favor, on August 31, 1974.

But less than one month later, just weeks before the commission was to begin its work, Wohlforth suddenly resigned from the Workers League, declaring that he would not cooperate with the investigation. In a letter October 6, 1974, replying to Wohlforth's resignation, Slaughter warned him against

asserting yourself as an individual leader against the movement. *Your* conviction that NF [Nancy Fields] is not a security risk must predominate over the security requirements and decisions of our leading bodies. *Your* assessment of your record as leader is placed before everything else. You find yourself unable to conceive of the Workers League as a party and as a vital part of the Fourth International. Instead you see it only as a retinue of your followers, who will collapse without you....

At this late hour, Comrade Wohlforth, we call upon you to reconsider and immediately change your position. It is not too late. You are called upon to resume immediately the leading responsibilities to the Workers League and the IC and collaborate in the work of the inquiry. This inquiry has had to wait a few days until the work can be completed, but arrangements are in hand to begin the actual investigation within the next few days. The comrades are instructed to complete their work and report to the IC within a very short time. The committee asks you, Comrade Wohlforth, to immediately withdraw your letter of resignation and collaborate fully in the work of the investigation. Only in this way can you prepare to resume your positions in the leadership.<sup>7</sup>

Banda, as he perhaps recalls, flew to the United States in October 1974 for what turned out to be a futile attempt to persuade Wohlforth to rejoin the Workers League. Despite Wohlforth's attempt to sabotage the work of the International Commission, it carried out its work and produced a report,



dated November 9, 1974, which concluded the following about Nancy Fields:

The inquiry established that from the age of 12 until the completion of her university education, NF was brought up, educated and financially supported by her aunt and uncle, Albert and Gigs Morris. Albert Morris is the head of the CIA's IBM computer operation in Washington as well as being a large stockholder in IBM. He was a member of the OSS, forerunner of the CIA, and worked in Poland as an agent of imperialism. During the 1960s a frequent house-guest at their home in Maine was Richard Helms, ex-director of the CIA and now US Ambassador in Iran....

We found that the record of NF in the party was that of a highly unstable person who never broke from the opportunist method of middle-class radicalism. She adopted administrative and completely subjective methods of dealing with political problems. These methods were extremely destructive, especially in the most decisive field of the building of leadership. TW [Tim Wohlforth] was fully aware of this instability, and bears the responsibility for bringing NF into leadership. He found himself left in an isolated position in which he eventually concealed NF's previous CIA connections from the IC. He bears clear political responsibility for this.

The inquiry found as follows:

After interviewing and investigating all the available material, there is no evidence to suggest that NF or TW is in any way connected with the work of the CIA or any other government agency. The inquiry took into account TW's many years of struggle for the party and the IC, often under very difficult conditions, and urged him to correct his individualist and pragmatist mistakes and return to the party.

We recommend that TW, once he withdraws his resignation from the Workers League, returns to the leading committees and to his work on the *Bulletin*, and has the right to be nominated to any position, including that of National Secretary, at the forthcoming National Conference early in 1975.

We recommend the immediate lifting of the suspension of NF, with the condition that she is not permitted to hold any office in the Workers League for two years.

The inquiry urgently draws the attention of all sections to the necessity of constant vigilance on matters of security. Our movement has great opportunities for growth in every country because of the unprecedented class struggles which must erupt from the world capitalist crisis. The situation also means that the counterrevolutionary activities of the CIA and all imperialist agencies against us will be intensified. It is a basic revolutionary duty to pay constant and detailed attention to these security matters as part of the turn to the masses for the building of revolutionary parties.<sup>8</sup>

The fact that the International Committee dared raise the issue of maintaining vigilance against the political police of the capitalist state enraged the SWP's Joseph Hansen, who was by then presiding over an organization which, according to published reports, had been penetrated by hundreds of FBI agents. He immediately declared his solidarity with Wohlforth's "right" to conceal, for reasons of personal convenience, vital information pertaining to the security of the revolutionary movement. Hansen knew very well that similar behavior by Sylvia Ageloff in 1938-40, who failed to tell the Fourth International everything she knew about her lover Ramon Mercader, facilitated this agent's assassination of Leon Trotsky.

The WRP's Pilling has written, "It was as a result of charges against Wohlforth that Healy's infamous 'Security and the Fourth International' was launched," as if there was something illegitimate in this connection. Hansen's vitriolic defense of Wohlforth's right to ignore the security needs of his own party and his labeling of concern for security as paranoia raised fundamental political questions for the Fourth International. How could revolutionary cadre be trained if Hansen's position was allowed to go unchallenged? If it was accepted that members, not to mention leaders, of a revolutionary organization could establish and maintain unreported relations with individuals who may be connected with the intelligence agencies of the capitalist state, this meant that the party would be left defenseless against the machinations of the political police.

When the ICFI voted at its Sixth World Congress in May 1975 to initiate an investigation — the first since 1940 — into

the circumstances surrounding the assassination of Leon Trotsky, it was to make the new generation of Marxist revolutionaries aware of the terrible human toll exacted from the Trotskyist movement by the combined agencies of world imperialism and the Soviet bureaucracy in the late 1930s and early 1940s. The ICFI did not anticipate that its investigation would uncover incriminating documents linking Hansen to both the Soviet GPU and the American FBI, which explained why Hansen had reacted so bitterly to the ICFI's actions in relation to Wohlforth.

The ICFI's handling of the Wohlforth affair and its initiation of the *Security and the Fourth International* investigation were entirely in keeping with the traditions of the Trotskyist movement. While Hansen's charge of paranoia found a ready response among all the diseased middle-class radicals who unfortunately infest the workers' movement, the International Committee was right to call Wohlforth to order. It would not hesitate to act in the same way if similar circumstances were to arise once again. Wohlforth's relation with a woman whose immediate family included a high CIA operative was not his own "personal business."

On September 28, 1940, just one month after Trotsky's assassination, the question of party members' "personal lives" was dealt with by James P. Cannon:

Now then ... we have to check up on carelessness. We want to know who is who in the party. We don't want to have any universal spy hunts because that is worse than the disease it tries to cure. Comrade Trotsky said many times that mutual suspicion among comrades can greatly demoralize a movement. On the other hand, there is a certain carelessness in the movement as a hangover from the past. We haven't probed deeply enough into the past of people even in leading positions — where they came from, how they live, whom they are married to, etc. Whenever in the past such questions — elementary for a revolutionary organization — were raised, the petty-bourgeois opposition would cry, "My God, you are invading the private lives of comrades!" Yes, that is precisely what we were doing, or more correctly, threatening to do — nothing ever came of it in the past. If we had checked up on such matters a little

more carefully we might have prevented some bad things in the days gone by.

We are proposing that we set up a control commission in the party. We are fully ready for that now. This will be a body of responsible and authoritative comrades who will take things in hand and carry every investigation to a conclusion one way or the other. This will do away with indiscriminate suspicions on the one side and undue laxity on the other. The net result can only be to reassure the party and strengthen its vigilance. We think the whole party now, with the petty-bourgeois riffraff out of our way, is ready for the appointment of such a body.<sup>9</sup>

In January 1975, Wohlforth completed a document denouncing the International Committee and the Workers League which he turned over to the Socialist Workers Party. Even after this, an appeal, dated January 22, 1975, was made to him by Cliff Slaughter: "You are called upon to abandon this course of providing aid to all the enemies of the International Committee and the Workers League, and to bring your document into the party, accepting that the discussion of it must take place within the framework of your acceptance of the discipline of the League and the political authority of the IC."<sup>10</sup>

Wohlforth refused to accept this principled course of action and made his desertion from the Workers League irrevocable. Within a few months, repudiating all that he had written over the previous 15 years, Wohlforth rejoined the Socialist Workers Party. This development confirmed that the political source of Wohlforth's destructive activities inside the leadership of the Workers League, including his relationship with Fields and his cover-up of her dubious background, was a capitulation to the pressures of American imperialism. This is why he found it impossible to act in a politically principled manner and soon wound up in the ranks of the very organization whose betrayal of Trotskyism he had correctly fought just one decade earlier. And that did not bring to a conclusion the process of his political degeneration.

The present attempts of the WRP to portray Wohlforth as a "victim" of Healyism find their supreme refutation in the political evolution of this traitor since he deserted the Workers League. His reentry into the SWP, where he was

promptly placed on its political committee, was just one point on a political trajectory that has led Wohlforth to repudiate Marxism and the dictatorship of the proletariat.

His present anticommunist position is summed up in an article he wrote for the September-October 1986 issue of *Against the Current*, a radical journal whose editorial board includes, among others, Noam Chomsky and Ernest Mandel. Wohlforth's article, entitled "The Two Souls of Leninism," argues that Stalinism is a product of Leninism.

I believe that I have proven that the single party state was the conscious construction of Lenin and Trotsky. It was *not* forced upon the Bolshevik leaders because of the treachery of the working class opposition. It was justified theoretically by the leading proponents of Leninism at the time....

However, I hold that Leninism is not valid as a democratic, revolutionary, working class heritage. We are now in a *Post-Leninist* period, a period in which we should insist upon pluralistic working class politics rather than suppression of working class parties, and revolutionary fronts composed of several parties rather than vanguard party leaderships.<sup>11</sup>

When Wohlforth resigned from the Workers League rather than accept a party inquiry into his violation of the elemental precepts of revolutionary security, when he insisted on his *personal* right to place his own subjective interests above that of the working class, he was already expressing in embryonic form the clearly anticommunist positions that find finished expression in the above quote.

Finally, there is Banda's claim that the WRP conducted the "entire" struggle against Wohlforth, with only "tactical help from the Workers League." We consider this to be perhaps the most politically significant aspect of Banda's falsification of the Wohlforth episode. As a matter of fact, the Workers League never claimed that "it was Dave North's leadership that fought Wohlforth." In 1974, David North was a member of the Workers League Political Committee. When the facts relating to Fields came to light in August 1974, he was among those who supported the motion suspending Fields and replacing Wohlforth as national secretary. Wohlforth's successor was Fred Mazelis, a founding member of the Workers

League, who assumed, under extremely difficult conditions, the responsibilities of the secretaryship, a position which he held for the next 15 months. During this crucial period, the foundations were laid down for the creation of a real collective leadership which functions to this day inside the Workers League.

If the struggle against Wohlforth is analyzed from the standpoint of its political content, it becomes obvious that the roles of the Workers League and the WRP are precisely the opposite of what is claimed by Banda. The Workers League waged the political struggle against Wohlforth; the WRP provided the tactical support.

The entire political and theoretical analysis of the degeneration of Wohlforth was produced by the Workers League leadership. In April 1975, the Workers League Political Committee published a powerful document, entitled *What Makes Wohlforth Run*, which provided a detailed analysis of Wohlforth's break with the International Committee. It dealt with fundamental questions of Marxist theory and political perspective. The next major document produced by the Workers League was *The Fourth International and the Renegade Wohlforth*, co-authored by North and Alex Steiner, which deepened the party's analysis of Wohlforth's attacks on the principles of Trotskyism after he had joined the Socialist Workers Party.

These documents represented the renewal of the struggle against Pabloite revisionism by the Workers League. In the light of Wohlforth's betrayal, the awesome historical implications of the 1953 split and the subsequent battle against the Socialist Workers Party were reassimilated by the entire party. Upon these strengthened foundations, the party turned more vigorously than ever toward the struggle to construct a Marxist vanguard party of the working class in the United States as part of the world party of socialist revolution.

What was the political contribution of the WRP to this crucial struggle? The record shows that not a single leader of the WRP wrote even one article analyzing the theory and politics of Wohlforth's betrayal, despite the fact that he had played a central role in the work of the ICFI for many years. This political indifference that reflected the

WRP's turn, already well under way, away from the struggle which it had earlier waged against revisionism. Abstaining from the theoretical struggle against Wohlforth, the WRP failed to assimilate any of the lessons that were to be learned from this vital experience through which the ICFI had passed in the United States. For this reason, the leaders of the WRP can today lie with impunity about the split with Wohlforth, without any fear of contradiction from the members of their own organization, who never knew and now do not care to know anything about the real life of the International Committee.

It would be worthwhile, moreover, to compare the exhaustive analysis made by the Workers League of Wohlforth with the manner in which Banda and Healy dealt with the political differences raised by Alan Thornett inside the WRP. Aside from the bureaucratic manner in which the WRP leadership preempted discussion by resorting to expulsions, the polemics prepared by Banda *A Menshevik Unmasked* and *Whither Thornett?* were characterized by their nationalist focus. Despite the fact that Thornett's documents called into question the legitimacy of the struggle waged by the International Committee against Pabloite revisionism since 1953, these decisive questions were dealt with in an off-hand fashion, mainly from the standpoint of defending the record of the WRP leadership in Britain.

Moreover, Banda's documents continuously belittled the programmatic heritage of Trotskyism, again and again counterposing "philosophical method," a phrase which played a purely decorative role in Banda's text, to its actual articulation in the program and perspectives of the party. This was a distortion of Marxism which facilitated the revisionism that was taking root inside the WRP. The WRP's insistence that programmatic questions were merely of a secondary character — that the "fundamental" questions of the struggle against revisionism were only tackled once "method" was dealt with at the level of the purest abstractions, in the pseudo-analysis of logical categories in and for themselves, palmed off as the inner and essential content of all political issues (the latter being contemptuously dismissed as little more than the outer and inessential

expression of the movement of logical thought-forms) — served to justify the most brazen violations in practice of the most basic programmatic conceptions of the Fourth International.

For the Workers League, the struggle against Wohlforth constituted a crucial chapter in its political development as a Trotskyist party capable of rooting itself in the struggles of the American working class. For the Workers Revolutionary Party, on the other hand, the brawl with Thornett proved to be yet another stage in the deepening political crisis that was to lead finally to its collapse.

Moreover, the political foundation for the opposition of the Workers League to the revisionist course of the WRP was prepared in the course of the struggle against Wohlforth. At the very time when the WRP leadership was abandoning the principles it had defended in an earlier period against the Pabloites, the Workers League was reeducating its entire membership on the basis of those historic lessons. From 1976, the paths of the WRP and the Workers League steadily diverged and led to the latter's open declaration of differences in the autumn of 1982.



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## M. Banda Embraces Stalinism (I)

Banda's "27 Reasons Why the International Committee Should Be Buried Forthwith and the Fourth International Built" was eagerly embraced by all those who agreed with the proposal advanced in the first part of the title. Among revisionists and centrists all over the world, but first and foremost within the WRP itself, Banda's diatribe was hailed as the death blow to the International Committee. Upon receiving Banda's document in January 1986, the WRP Central Committee immediately used it as the political basis for the drafting of two resolutions, passed by a vote of 12 to 3, repudiating the political authority of the International Committee.

Just one day after Banda's document was published in the February 7, 1986 issue of *Workers Press*, weekly organ of the WRP, the three central committee members who had voted against the resolutions as well as all other supporters of the International Committee were barred, with the aid of police, from attending the scheduled eighth congress of the WRP and then expelled from the organization. This action completed the WRP's split from the International Committee.

"27 Reasons" was pronounced to be a significant contribution to the initiation of a new discussion on the history of the Trotskyist movement. While Bill Hunter, for example, found Banda's document to be "one-sided," objecting (in the polite "gentlemanly" manner beloved by the British middle-class) to the most obvious falsifications of the history of the

Fourth International prior to 1953, he did not object either to Banda's denunciation of the "Open Letter" or to the proposed burial of the International Committee.

An even less critical attitude was adopted by Cliff Slaughter, who wrote on March 11, 1986: "The discussion on Mike B's document must continue, and I am not going to take it up here. I will say that Mike struck a blow against North's ludicrous claim for continuity, and centralised authority. I agree with Mike that the FI was proclaimed but never built. I believe that Mike does not say how and why it should now be built, but I am sure he will." <sup>1</sup>

As might be expected, on the subject of Banda's funeral arrangements, the International Committee held a different opinion of his document. Insofar as last rites were in order, the ICFI concluded, upon reading his "27 Reasons," that they should be administered to Banda. The very first paragraph of our analysis entitled "The Heritage We Defend" declared:

As far as Marxism and the struggle for socialism is concerned, Michael Banda, the general secretary of the Workers Revolutionary Party, can no longer be counted among the living. With the publication of his "27 Reasons Why the International Committee Should Be Buried Forthwith and the Fourth International Built," Banda has declared his irrevocable political break with Trotskyism and has severed all connections with the revolutionary movement under whose banner he had fought his entire adult life.

The beginning of our analysis, published while Banda was still general secretary of the WRP, drew attention to the implications of his "27 Reasons": "Thus, Banda's attack is not limited to the International Committee. He is challenging the political legitimacy of the Fourth International and the specific tendency known as Trotskyism....

"To give credence to Banda's arguments means acknowledging that it is necessary to reconsider the whole place our international movement has traditionally assigned to Trotsky in the history of Marxism."

This analysis of the significance of Banda's document has been widely reprinted. In bringing our examination of

"27 Reasons" to a conclusion, there is no need to speculate about Banda's future evolution. A new document written by Banda at the end of 1986 has come into our possession, and it records his irrevocable passage into the camp of counterrevolution.

Entitled "What is Trotskyism? Or Will the Real Trotsky Please Stand Up?," Banda's new document is a frantic denunciation of Trotskyism, a belated tribute to Joseph Stalin and a declaration of political allegiance to the Kremlin bureaucracy. It is an open attack on the entire struggle waged by Trotsky from the 1920s on against the degeneration of the Bolshevik Party, the usurpation of political power by the Stalinist bureaucracy and the betrayal of the Russian and world socialist revolution. In this new attack, Banda quotes the texts of everyone from the ultrarightist James Burnham, to the state capitalist Max Shachtman, to the theoretical godfather of Pabloite revisionism, Isaac Deutscher. After having spent 40 years in the Fourth International, Banda has discovered that Leon Trotsky was wrong in refusing to capitulate to Stalin in 1928! Trotskyism, he writes, "has now become synonymous with scholastic pettifogging and centrist rhetoric combined with the most grotesque political prostration before the Social Democratic bureaucracy and the imperialist state. Together with the Euro-Communists it stands as one of the most discredited of anti-communist, anti-Soviet and anti-working class groups outside the Social Democracy."

That is not all. Banda now asserts that he was mistaken in his previous belief that Trotsky's politics could not be held responsible for the crisis inside the International Committee:

In my "27 Reasons" I incorrectly stated that Trotsky had "sown dragon's teeth and reaped fleas." This only shows how widespread and deep were Trotsky's mystifications and mis-education of generations of would-be Marxist revolutionaries who spurned the Popular Frontism of the Comintern and turned to Trotskyism on the mistaken assumption that this was authentic Leninism. Belatedly — and somewhat reluctantly — I have become convinced, through a careful consideration of my own experience in what was ostensibly the strongest Trotskyist group in Britain that there is a direct causative connection between the impasse and

disintegration of Trotskyism and the method and policies advocated by Trotsky. Conversely, I would say that if Trotsky's policies and perspectives were right and did correspond to the real development of historical law then the movement he founded would today be counting its members in millions with sections all over the world — principally in the USSR, Eastern Europe and China.

Banda writes that Trotsky's

claim to Marxist-Leninist authenticity must be doubted. Not only has his policy failed to materialize in any party anywhere....

History has been a satire on Trotsky's beliefs and principles. After 60 years only an ignorant fetishist or an idolatrous worshiper of a personality cult would maintain that Trotsky's analysis of the USSR and his methods of party building, as well as his concept of a world party, are correct and consistent with the tradition and method of Lenin and Marx. Only an empiricist simpleton or charlatan would maintain that the collapse of the Fourth International and the disintegration of its vaunted successor — the ICFI — was an unfortunate episode not connected with an objective process and determined by the operation of the dialectical laws of history and the movement of social forces.

Here we come across just one of the many self-contradictory assertions with which his latest opus abounds. On the one hand, he proclaims that only "empiricist simpletons" can continue to defend the program of Trotskyism. And yet, the reasons which Banda gives for renouncing Trotskyism are examples of most vulgar empirical thinking: Trotskyism is wrong because the Fourth International does not consist of mass parties which lead millions!

If such superficial criteria are to serve as the basis of political judgments, then it is not simply Trotskyism which must be condemned. After all, Marx predicted the conquest of power by the working class in the advanced centers of capitalism, but — as every petty-bourgeois academic is quick to point out whenever the opportunity arises — the overthrow of the bourgeoisie has been confined to the more backward countries. Nearly 140 years after the publication of *The Communist Manifesto*, the working classes of the advanced

... have still to carry out the historic tasks

outlined by Marx. Does this fact call into question the "authenticity" of Marxism? Or does it call into question the revolutionary capacities of the proletariat? Banda's attacks on Trotskyism always reveal themselves to be nothing less than arguments for the repudiation of the perspective of world socialist revolution. Trotsky provided the answer to spineless creatures such as Banda: "Twenty-five years in the scales of history, when it is a question of profoundest changes in economic and cultural systems, weigh less than an hour in the life of man. What good is the individual who, because of empirical failures in the course of an hour or a day, renounces a goal that he set for himself on the basis of the experience and analysis of his entire previous lifetime?"<sup>2</sup>

Proceeding to his main indictment against the Fourth International, Banda asserts:

What all varieties of Trotskyism share in common is an opportunist complacency based on a subjective idealist hatred of material contradictions, which are the motive force of all progress, change and development. Organically and inseparably connected with this is a petit-bourgeois functionary arrogance which refuses to critically evaluate the previous practice of the Fourth International and instead seeks to consecrate wrong practices and false assumptions with dogmatic rationalizations.

The source of these fatal flaws was Trotsky himself, who "failed to grasp the content and essence of the historic changes in the USSR and opened the door for a form of centrist ideology whose hallmark is a profound scepticism and subjectivism."

In the same breath, however, Banda tells us that he does not intend with this condemnation "to disparage Trotsky's analysis of events in China, Spain, Germany, the USSR, France and elsewhere, as well as his writings on literature, science and military affairs. He had an encyclopaedic intellect, penetrating vision and the range and subtlety of his thought and power of polemic was unique."

Now this is truly mutiny on one's knees. Banda makes no attempt to reconcile his acknowledgment of Trotsky's "penetrating vision," even in relation to events inside the USSR, with his allegation that the founder of the Fourth Interna-

tional hated material contradictions and could not understand the central event of his political life, the Russian Revolution!

There is a glaring contradiction between Banda's denunciation of Trotskyism's "subjectivism" and the fact that his condemnation of the Fourth International is built upon evaluations which are of an entirely subjective character. Previously, he attributed the collapse of the Fourth International to the presence of various rotten individuals inside the leadership of the movement after the death of Trotsky. Now he discovers that the central culprit was Trotsky himself! The existence of the Fourth International and the generations of revolutionists who have been won to its banner all over the world is attributed to nothing more than Trotsky's supposed inability "to grasp the content and essence of historic changes in the USSR...." That real class forces are involved, that in the struggle of Trotskyism against Stalinism is expressed the irreconcilable opposition of the working class to the bureaucracy, is a "minor" detail that Banda does not bother to dwell on.

Attempting to give his banal attack an air of profundity, Banda sets out to diminish Trotsky's stature as a Marxist theoretician. Piling up one absurdity upon another, Banda, having just declared that he does not question Trotsky's genius, nevertheless announces that his "amateurish and superficial — yet well intentioned — attempts to enrich the dialectic were somehow confused with the truly scientific and profoundly professional development and concretisation of dialectical materialism carried out by Lenin."

Perhaps in some future article Banda will indicate how Trotsky, armed with only an "amateurish and superficial" grasp of the dialectic, managed to display a "range and subtlety of thought" that was "unique." In the meantime, he attempts to substantiate his critique of Trotsky's theoretical capacities by attacking his last great work, *In Defence of Marxism*, the series of polemical articles written against the American pragmatists, Max Shachtman and James Burnham. This book, he declares, "provides a clue to his serious and damaging departure from Marxist method in his analysis of the USSR after 1928...."

Banda makes the astonishing claim that in this book,

Trotsky himself reveals a dismal indifference to the dialectical relationship of Marxist theory embodied in the party and the spontaneous struggles of the working class. This essentially idealist relapse is closely connected to an even more profound problem — the question of establishing the coincidence of dialectics, logic and theory of knowledge (epistemology). Trotsky never once alluded to this problem and was almost entirely concerned with the historical explanation of problems and processes but neglected the logical approach. This was left entirely to Lenin to develop specifically in his *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* and *Philosophical Notebooks* (Volumes 14 and 38 respectively of his collected works).

The devotees of Banda's attacks on Trotskyism will, no doubt, be thrilled by this gaudy display of theoretical erudition. This is the explanation of the supposed failure of the Fourth International for which they have all been waiting: Trotsky "never once alluded" to the problem of "the coincidence of dialectics, logic and theory of knowledge." Moreover, he "neglected" the logical approach. Inasmuch as Banda himself never exhibited the slightest interest in problems of dialectical method, we doubt very much that he even understands what all these phrases really mean. At any rate, insofar as he uses these phrases as a club with which to hit Trotsky over the head, he succeeds only in making a fool of himself.

For Marxists, the coincidence of dialectics, logic and the theory of knowledge signifies recognition of the objective material connection between the universal forms of human thought and the most general properties of the material world which it reflects. This "coincidence" was initially discovered by Hegel in the course of his struggle against Kantianism, albeit in an idealist manner. Rejecting the metaphysical separation of the material world and the objective thought-forms through which it is reproduced and assimilated in the human mind, Hegel invested these thought-forms, i.e., the categories and concepts of logic, with an "ontological" significance. That is, starting from his idealist standpoint, which asserted the primacy of thought over matter, Hegel established the identity of the "forms of being" and the

"forms of knowing." As an idealist, Hegel thus asserted that these logical forms were not merely stages in the development of human thought; rather, they were the essential substance of all spheres of material reality.

While negating Hegel's idealism — which derived the entire development of nature and history from the logical unfolding of a mystical "Absolute Spirit" — Marxism preserved the profound scientific truth that was contained within the mystical presentation and made it the basis for a materialist theory of knowledge which made explicable the whole range of the development of human cognition. The categories of logic are not merely subjective and in-born properties of thought through which an intrinsically chaotic world is rendered comprehensible. Rather, they are the historically-developed forms of the reflection in the minds of social man of the universal properties of matter and of social being.

Or as Lenin put it, based on his materialist reading of Hegel: "Logic is the science not of external forms of thought, but of the laws of development, 'of all material, natural and spiritual things,' i.e., of the development of the entire concrete content of the world and of its cognition, i.e., the sum-total, the conclusion of the *History* of knowledge of the world."<sup>3</sup>

The understanding of the objective material foundations of logic is, for a Marxist, the necessary premise of conscious theoretical work. To suggest, let alone baldly assert, that the identity of dialectics, logic and the theory of knowledge was beyond Trotsky's intellectual scope can only mean that Banda, despite all that he has read of Trotsky, is himself so ignorant of method that he cannot even recognize the application of the dialectic in the writings of one of its greatest masters. This explains, in part, his superficial attitude to the works of Trotsky. A theoretically untrained ear recognizes in the music of Beethoven only a succession of beautiful sounds. But an educated musician detects the massive contrapuntal structure upon which the great harmonies are constructed, and from this knowledge draws a richer appreciation of the master's genius.

Banda is incapable of recognizing the theoretical infrastructure of Trotsky's writings, and his claim that Trotsky did



not devote himself explicitly to problems of Marxist epistemology is the type of ignorant assertion that one would expect of a philistine who passes judgment on things about which he knows nothing. Trotsky's command of this subject — in his writings on science, literature, military affairs, art and culture — was truly breathtaking. As an examination of Soviet intellectual history between 1921 and 1926 would show, no other figure in the Bolshevik Party, including Lenin, exercised such vast influence. It was by no means accidental that many of the most outstanding Marxists were to be found assembled under the banner of the Left Opposition. In his speeches and writings, Trotsky examined the epistemological implications of the discoveries of Darwin, Mendeleev, Pavlov and Freud. Few Marxists investigated with such profound originality the complex problem of the development of consciousness from the unconscious. Trotsky even devoted an entire article to the examination of the Stalinist bureaucracy from the standpoint of its philosophical method.

Moreover, the very problem of "coincidence," with which Lenin grappled in the passage quoted above, i.e., the objective significance of logic, occupied the very center of Trotsky's refutation of Burnham in the book which Banda now attacks, *In Defence of Marxism*:

We call our dialectic, materialist, since its roots are neither in heaven nor in the depths of our "free will," but in objective reality, in nature. Consciousness grew out of the unconscious, psychology out of physiology, the organic world out of the inorganic, the solar system out of nebulae. On all the rungs of this ladder of development, the quantitative changes were transformed into qualitative. Our thought, including dialectical thought, is only one of the forms of the expression of changing matter. There is place within this system for neither God, nor Devil, nor immortal soul, nor eternal norms of laws and morals. The dialectic of thinking, having grown out of the dialectic of nature, possesses consequently a thoroughly materialist character.<sup>4</sup>

Further on, Trotsky writes:

All this demonstrates, in passing, that our methods of thought, both formal logic and the dialectic, are not arbitrary constructions of our reason but rather expressions

of the actual inter-relationships in nature itself. In this sense, the universe throughout is permeated with "unconscious" dialectics. But nature did not stop there. No little development occurred before nature's inner relationships were converted into the language of the consciousness of foxes and men, and man was then enabled to generalise these forms of consciousness and transform them into logical (dialectical) categories, thus creating the possibility for probing more deeply into the world about us.<sup>5</sup>

Incidentally, Banda witlessly lauds Burnham's "savaging of Trotsky's 'dialectical foxes,'" proving that he does not accept the objective foundations of logic, and thus aligns himself with the most reactionary opponents of materialist dialectics. Burnham, as is well known, became an anticommunist, an advocate of nuclear war against the USSR, and is today one of the ideological patrons of Ronald Reagan.

What about Banda's claim that Trotsky preoccupied himself solely with the historical, rather than the "logical" approach? Once again, we must point out that Banda does not know what he is talking about. However, he does not deserve all the blame for his clumsy attack on Trotsky's credentials as a dialectical materialist. Much of his argument, and especially his claim that Trotsky "neglected the logical approach," is largely based on the views of his longtime mentor, Gerry Healy. Based on a garbled reading of Hegel, Healy concluded that in the formal knowledge of the sequential progression of the categories of dialectical logic is to be found an all-purpose substitute for any concrete examination of the historical process.

According to Healy, logical categories are the distilled essence of all material phenomena, including historical processes. Therefore, in the analysis of contemporary events, a great deal of time can be saved if, rather than tediously examining the historical processes and social forces out of which they developed, one simply dismisses these events as a secondary manifestation of the essential categories. In other words, rather than examine the specific import of a particular concrete development of the class struggle, one simply pronounces it to be the manifestation of movement of "quantity" into "quality," or one asserts, with a knowing air, that it is the mere "appearance" of an "essence," or the

outer "form" of a more fundamental "content." This, Healy believed, was the "logical" approach, and that is what he taught Banda.

This method of work has absolutely nothing to do with Marxism, and is related to the Hegelian conception only as caricature. Marx explicitly repudiated such superficial panlogism. Engels, in his celebrated outline of the rational content of the dialectical method developed by Hegel, derided the distortion of the old titan's method in the hands of his "left" epigones:

The official Hegelian school had assimilated only the most simple devices of the master's dialectics and applied them to everything and anything, often moreover with ridiculous incompetence. Hegel's whole heritage was, so far as they were concerned, confined exclusively to a template, by means of which any subject could be knocked into shape, and a set of words and phrases whose only remaining purpose was to turn up conveniently whenever they experienced a lack of ideas and of concrete knowledge. Thus it happened, as a professor at Bonn has said, that these Hegelians knew nothing but could write about everything. These results were, of course, accordingly.<sup>6</sup>

Not understanding Hegel and the significance of his monumental *Science of Logic*, let alone its materialist reworking by Marx, Healy hit upon the idea that the logical and historical methods of analysis are formal opposites which must be rigidly counterposed. In *neither* the works of Marx *nor* Hegel is such a rigid separation of the logical and historical to be found. As Engels explained:

It was the exceptional historical sense underlying Hegel's manner of reasoning which distinguished it from that of all other philosophers. However abstract and idealist the form employed, yet his evolution of ideas runs always parallel with the evolution of universal history, and the latter was indeed supposed to be only the proof of the former. Although this reversed the actual relation and stood it on its head, yet the real content was invariably incorporated in his philosophy, especially since Hegel — unlike his followers — did not rely on ignorance, but was one of the most erudite thinkers of all time. He was the first to try to demonstrate that there is an evolution, an intrinsic coherence in history,

and however strange some things in his philosophy of history may seem to us now, the grandeur of the basic conception is still admirable today, compared both with his predecessors and with those who following him ventured to advance general historical observations. This monumental conception of history pervades the *Phänomenologie, Ästhetik* and *Geschichte der Philosophie*, and the material is everywhere set forth historically, in a definite historical context, even if in an abstract distorted manner.<sup>7</sup>

Then, analyzing the procedure employed by Marx in his *Critique of Political Economy*, Engels clearly elaborates what is meant by the historical and logical methods and establishes their inseparable interconnection:

Even after the determination of the method, the critique of economics could still be arranged in two ways — historically or logically. Since in the course of history, as in its literary reflection, the evolution proceeds by and large from the simplest to the more complex relations, the historical development of political economy constituted a natural clue, which the critique could take as a point of departure, and then the economic categories would appear on the whole in the same order as in the logical exposition. This form seems to have the advantage of greater lucidity, for it traces the *actual* development, but in fact it would thus become, at most, more popular. History moves often in leaps and bounds and in a zigzag line, and as this would have to be followed throughout, it would mean not only that a considerable amount of material of slight importance would have to be included, but also that the train of thought would frequently have to be interrupted; it would, moreover, be impossible to write the history of economy without that of bourgeois society, and the task would thus become immense, because of the absence of all preliminary studies. The logical method of approach was therefore the only suitable one. This, however, is indeed nothing but the historical method, only stripped of the historical form and diverting chance occurrences. The point where this history begins must also be the starting point of the train of thought, and its further progress will be simply the reflection, in abstract and theoretically consistent form, of the historical course. Though the reflection is corrected, it is corrected in accordance with laws provided by the actual historical course, since each factor can be examined at the

stage of development where it reaches its full maturity, its classical form.<sup>8</sup>

In yet another famous passage, this one directed against the ill-fated Eugen Dühring, Engels exposed the vacuity of the type of "logical" method espoused by Healy and Banda:

This is only giving a new twist to the old favourite ideological method, also known as the *a priori* method, which consists in ascertaining the properties of an object, by logical deduction from the concept of the object, instead of from the object itself. First the concept of the object is fabricated from the object; then the spit is turned round, and the object is measured by its image, the concept. The object is then to conform to the concept, not the concept to the object. With Herr Dühring the simplest elements, the ultimate abstractions he can reach, do service for the concept, which does not alter matters; these simplest elements are at best of a purely conceptual nature. The philosophy of reality, therefore, proves here again to be pure ideology, the deduction of reality not from itself but from a concept.<sup>9</sup>

Dühring had the "privilege" of seeing himself immortalized by Engels. Being of robust constitution, this would-be slayer of Marxism lived until 1921. By the time he died at the age of 88, the refutation of Dühring's "revolution in science" served as the foundation of the theoretical education of millions of workers in countless countries. But best of all, Dühring lived to see Marxism's ultimate refutation of his stupidities: the October Revolution. For our part, we wish Mr. Banda good health (he should eat less and exercise more) and hope that he lives to see a no less substantial refutation of his attack on Trotskyism.

According to those who crudely counterpose the logical method to the historical process, the structure of Marx's *Capital* is developed through a process of purely theoretical deduction, whereby one economic category simply, out of its own abstract content, gives birth to the next. Marx himself explicitly rejected such an interpretation of his work. Reviewing the formulations he employed in the *Rough Draft (Grundrisse)* which were to become the foundation of his *Capital*, Marx wrote: "It will be necessary later, before this question is dropped, to correct the idealist manner of its

presentation, which makes it seem as if it were merely a matter of conceptual determinations and of the dialectic of these concepts.'<sup>10</sup>

Rosdolsky, the author of the important interpretive study, *The Making of Marx's "Capital,"* commenting on the above passage, further explains: "In other words: the reader should not imagine that economic categories are anything other than the reflections of real relations, or that the logical derivation of these categories could proceed independently of their historical derivation."<sup>11</sup>

It has been fashionable among all sorts of petty-bourgeois "epistemologists" to interpret Marx's *Capital*, especially the crucial opening sections of Volume 1, as simply an exercise in abstract logic, with the movement of the value form developing in a sequence defined entirely by an immanent conceptual dialectic whose structure is unrelated to a real historical process. Such an interpretation renders Marx's most important work incomprehensible. The demystification of the value form achieved by Marx and the tracing of its development from its genesis ( $x$  commodity A =  $y$  commodity B) to "the dazzling money-form" could only be achieved through the most profound assimilation of the entire course of human history. Behind each of the equations employed by Marx to trace the evolution of the forms of value lie whole epochs of human history, from savagery to barbarism and civilization. For Marx, each of the economic categories with which he deals "bear the stamp of history."

Thus, the study of dialectical logic does not provide Marxists with a master key which frees them from the concrete study of either natural or social processes. Rather, it directs that study, enabling Marxists to conquer the material "from within," so to speak, separate the essential from the inessential, identify the innerconnections which bind the antagonistic elements of each phenomenon into a unified whole, and grasp the concealed laws which govern the transition of one "moment" of development into another.

In the study of historical processes, the theoretical repertoire of the Marxist is not confined to the categories of abstract logic alone, inasmuch as these reflect only the most general properties of the material world. The application of

dialectical materialism to the sphere of social relations has resulted in the development of historical materialism, whose categories, both richer and more specific than those of pure logic, are the indispensable tools of the Marxist analysis of society.

To argue that Lenin employed the "logical" method of analysis as opposed to Trotsky's supposedly "exclusive" concern "with the historical explanation of problems and processes" is another one of Banda's stupidities. The author of *The Revolution Betrayed* used exactly the same method as the author of *Imperialism*. In both works, the working out and enrichment of specific concepts was connected at every point of the analysis with the real historical process. For Lenin, it was a matter of theoretically analyzing the transition from free competition to monopoly capitalism, and the relation of this process to the modern labor movement. Trotsky sought to explain the degeneration of the first workers' state and the growth of the bureaucratic caste. At the core of the conceptual definitions of both Lenin and Trotsky were not abstract logical forms, but categories which defined and expressed in theoretically consistent form definite production relations and the interaction of real class forces.

The reactionary content of Banda's attack on Trotsky's theoretical capacities is exposed when he declares that the real continuity of Lenin's philosophical work is to be found in the writings of ... Mao Tse-tung, who supposedly "saw the importance of Lenin's work and this is clearly revealed in his works *On Practice* and *On Contradiction*."

It is really obscene to lump together the writings of Lenin with the ghost-written parody of dialectics that appeared under the by-line of Mao Tse-tung. Neither Lenin nor Trotsky utilized pseudo-Marxist verbiage to justify class collaboration with the bourgeoisie, which was the real purpose of *On Contradiction*, with its discovery of "nonantagonistic contradictions" between the working class and the national bourgeoisie. But let us pass on from Banda's attempt to trace the development of Marxism from Lenin to Mao and various members of the Soviet Institute for Marxism-Leninism. Attacking *In Defence of Marxism*, he claims that Trotsky

made unpardonable concessions to bourgeois ideology for having written the following:

Scientific socialism is the conscious expression of the unconscious historical process; namely, the instinctive and elemental drive of the proletariat to reconstruct society on communist beginnings. The *organic tendencies in the psychology of the workers spring to life with utmost rapidity* in the epoch of crises and wars. The discussion has revealed beyond all question a clash in the party between a petty-bourgeois tendency and a proletarian tendency. The petty-bourgeois tendency reveals its confusion in its attempt to reduce the program of the party to the small coin of "concrete" questions. *The proletarian tendency on the contrary strives to correlate all the partial questions into theoretical unity.* At stake at the present time is not the extent to which individual members of the majority consciously apply the dialectic method. What is important is the fact that the majority as a whole pushes toward the *proletarian posing* of the questions *and by very reason of this tends to assimilate the dialectic which is the "algebra of the revolution."* (Banda's emphasis.)

"This was Trotsky's greatest blow against Lenin," Banda proclaims. "Even Burnham," he adds, "a trained philosopher, knew better than that and was relentless in his pursuit of this sophistry."

What was the "sophistry"? It is impermissible, Banda claims, to suggest that the Marxist program articulates the unconscious historical striving of the proletariat as a class. To state that there exists any connection between revolutionary socialism and the "organic tendencies in the psychology of workers" is, if you please, a capitulation to "spontaneity." Banda, in truth, is not protesting against Trotsky's formulation in the name of Marxism but in behalf of petty-bourgeois intellectuals who would like to believe that they, not the proletariat, constitute the real social foundation for the development and perpetuation of Marxism. They resent the identification of the historical perspective of Marxism with the aspirations of the working class.

But Trotsky's observation, written against the petty-bourgeois Burnham and his academically-developed anti-Marxist prejudices, is correct. It in no way contradicts Lenin's



writing on the question of spontaneity. To recognize the domination of bourgeois ideology in the workers' movement does not negate the unconscious striving of the proletariat for socialism, which the revolutionary movement seeks continuously to develop and make fully conscious. To deny that such a striving exists is to reject the historical implications of the formation of the proletariat and its social organization in large-scale capitalist industry. One could not speak with any conviction of the development, sooner or later, of a socialist movement wherever there exists a substantial working class population. It is to suggest that socialism might find a mass base as easily in the petty bourgeoisie as in the working class, and that the approach of the petty-bourgeois intellectual to socialism is essentially no different from that of a worker.

In *What Is To Be Done* Lenin states that it is "perfectly true" that "the working class *spontaneously gravitates* towards socialism." This explains why "the workers are able to assimilate it so easily...."<sup>12</sup>

This is the same point made by Trotsky in his reference to "organic tendencies." As it is clear that Trotsky is speaking only of "the instinctive and elemental drive" of the working class toward socialism, it is an out and out falsification to suggest that Trotsky in any way belittled the decisive significance of the party's role in the struggle for Marxism in the working class.

It is significant that Banda agrees with Burnham's haughty dismissal of Trotsky's observation that "a worker who has gone through the school of the class struggle gains from his own experience an inclination toward dialectical thinking."<sup>13</sup> Banda quotes at length from Burnham's outraged response: "Where are these workers, comrade Trotsky?" In 1940, it came as no surprise to the revolutionists inside the Socialist Workers Party that James Burnham, a professor at New York University who frequently admitted that he did not want to devote his life to revolutionary work, did not know that such workers existed nor how to find them.

If Banda, along with Burnham, considers Trotsky's observation to be a catastrophic concession to proletarian spontaneity that provides the answer to all the "mistakes" in his political life, what then does Banda make of the following well-known

passage from the writings of Lenin, on the eve of the October Revolution, where, in anecdotal form, he expressed a virtually identical thought:

After the July days, thanks to the extremely solicitous attention with which the Kerensky government honoured me, I was obliged to go underground. Of course, it was the workers who sheltered people like us. In a small working-class house in a remote working-class suburb of Petrograd, dinner is being served. The hostess puts bread on the table. The host says: "Look what fine bread. 'They' dare not give us bad bread now. And we had almost given up even thinking that we'd ever get good bread in Petrograd again."

I was amazed at this class appraisal of the July days. My thoughts had been revolving around the political significance of those events, weighing the role they played in the general course of events, analysing the situation that caused this zigzag in history and the situation it would create, and how we ought to change our slogans and alter our Party apparatus to adapt it to the changed situation. As for bread, I, who had not known want, did not give it a thought. I took the bread for granted, as a by-product of the writer's work, as it were. The mind approaches the foundation of everything, the class struggle for bread, through political analysis that follows an extremely complicated and devious path.

This member of the oppressed class, however, even though one of the well-paid and quite intelligent workers, takes the bull by the horns with that astonishing simplicity and straightforwardness, with that firm determination and amazing clarity of outlook from which we intellectuals are as remote as the stars in the sky. The whole world is divided into two camps: "us," the working people, and "them," the exploiters. Not a shadow of embarrassment over what had taken place; it was just one of the battles in the long struggle between labour and capital. When you fell trees, chips fly.

"What a painful thing is this 'exceptionally complicated situation' created by the revolution," that's how the bourgeois intellectual thinks and feels.

"We squeezed 'them' a bit; 'they' won't dare to lord it over us as they did before. We'll squeeze again — and chuck them out altogether," that's how the worker thinks and feels. <sup>14</sup>

And of what is this story an illustration, if not the workers'

**inclination toward dialectical thinking and the organic socialist tendencies in their psychology?**

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## M. Banda Embraces Stalinism (II)

Having worked up quite a lather over Trotsky's alleged incapacity to understand the significance of conceptual thinking and his supposed capitulation to the spontaneity of the working class, Banda gravely intones: "This is not a small question which can be brushed aside as an episodic error in Trotsky's otherwise brilliant theoretical repertoire. It might even be argued that the fate of the world socialist revolution depends on a philosophically irreconcilable attitude to "natural dialectics," "proletarian philosophy" and "proletarian posing" of problems."

One must restrain the urge to laugh aloud upon reading these words, for Banda's ringing appeal for philosophical irreconcilability is placed in the middle of a lengthy and bitter denunciation of Trotsky's refusal to abandon the struggle for Marxism in the USSR and capitulate to the Stalinist bureaucracy. While accusing Trotsky of softness toward the spontaneity of the working class, Banda's political line is now based on complete prostration before the "spontaneity" of the bureaucracy.

The crux of Banda's indictment of Trotsky is that he refused to liquidate the Left Opposition in 1928-29. Stalin, who had until then been pursuing, in alliance with the Bukharinite right wing, a policy of accommodation to the wealthy sections of the peasantry (Kulaks), suddenly swung to the left and began implementing a program of rapid industrialization based on the massive collectivization of agriculture.

Asserting that these new policies removed all legitimate reasons for the existence of the Left Opposition, Banda declares that they represented the irreversible triumph of the socialist revolution whose real leader was Joseph Stalin!

It is absolutely clear to me after a careful and detailed study of the history of the Soviet economy and state in the 1930's that Trotsky's attitude to the far reaching and decisive changes initiated by Stalin in industry and agriculture was ambiguous, sceptical and abstentionist. In retrospect it appears that Trotsky, who first advanced the policy of planned economy, industrialisation and collectivisation of the peasantry, was so convinced of the Right Wing trend personified by Stalin that he could never condition himself to accept a volte face [about-face] by Stalin or, worse still, the usurpation of his policy by the Centre group and a ruthless drive against Bukharin and the Right Wing.

Trying to make a case against Trotsky, Banda eulogizes Stalin, and writes rapturously about his empirical swing to the left:

There was no turning back and the intensity and scope of Stalin's measures left no doubt in anyone's mind about Stalin's resolve to carry it through. But where was the prophet leader of the Left Opposition? He was stumbling and groping in an incredible maze of confusion....

Even when the deformed dictatorship of the working class had, with unprecedented ferocity and brutality, crushed the peasantry and smashed the right wing and driven it into limbo — Trotsky refused adamantly to bow to reality.

What was this reality to which Trotsky refused to bow? In 1928, the Stalinist leadership was suddenly confronted with the catastrophic consequences of the reactionary policies it had pursued over the previous five years. The continued existence of the workers' state was directly threatened when the kulaks began withholding grain from the cities. Under the merciless lash of immediate pressures, Stalin's faction, based on the party and state bureaucracy, broke with the Bukharinites and lurched to the left.

Taken totally by surprise and lacking any coherent program of their own to deal with the situation, the Stalinists grabbed hold of large portions of the Left Opposition's

program, excluding, of course, all those sections which dealt with the necessity to restore party democracy. Moreover, the brutal and administrative methods employed by the Stalinists in implementing the program contradicted the theoretical outlook which had guided the Left Opposition in its original elaboration.

Banda prefers not to speak of the period between 1923 and 1928. For the time being, at least until his next document, he raises no criticism of the policies of the Left Opposition prior to 1928. But to denounce Trotsky for having refused to capitulate to the empirical shift of the bureaucracy in 1928, disregarding the fundamental questions of *international* revolutionary program and strategy that were raised by the Left Opposition during the previous five years, is to break irrevocably with Marxism.

The central issue confronting Trotsky and the Left Opposition in 1928 was not whether they were for or against Stalin's left turn. The orientation of the Left Opposition was determined, first and foremost, by international considerations, that is, by the perspective of world socialist revolution. Though expelled from the Communist Party and exiled to the far reaches of the Soviet Union, the Left Opposition gave critical support to those anti-kulak measures which had been forced upon the Stalinists by dire necessity. But Trotsky would not repudiate the Platform of the Left Opposition or accept its piecemeal adaptation to the policies of the "Center," for to have done so would have meant capitulation to the nationalist program of "socialism in a single country," which remained the fundamental political axis of Stalinism.

For Trotsky and the Left Opposition, only a correct international policy — one based on the strengthening of the Communist International and the extension of the socialist revolution, above all, into Western Europe — could assure the survival of the USSR and the creation of a socialist society. The necessary measures to develop Soviet industry and strengthen the internal foundations of the proletarian dictatorship in the USSR could not be a substitute for the elaboration and realization of an international revolutionary strategy.

Banda concedes that Trotsky had first issued the call for economic planning and an increased rate of industrialization. All the analyses developed by Trotsky between 1925 and 1927 faced bitter opposition from the Stalinists, who were upholding the alliance with the kulaks and rejecting proposals for more rapid industrialization as "adventurism." Trotsky rejected as utopian nonsense the arguments that the construction of socialism could be realized inside the USSR without the extension of the revolution. This was the very same position upon which Lenin had insisted again and again.

Banda has conveniently forgotten that the crisis confronting the USSR in 1928 was to a large extent the direct product of the disastrous policies carried out by the Stalinists inside the Communist International. He does not make any reference whatsoever to the consequences of the Stalin-Bukharin "theory" of "socialism in a single country" for the fate of the socialist revolution in Europe and Asia. Banda's political disintegration finds its consummate expression in the fact that the international dimension of the struggle for socialism no longer exists for him. He no longer accepts — in fact, he directly rejects — that there exists any connection between the building of socialism in the USSR and the extension of the proletarian revolution.

Therefore, Banda says absolutely nothing about the defeat of the German working class in 1923 and the Stalinist-led right-centrist degeneration of the Comintern during the next four years, which produced the defeats in Britain and China. These historic setbacks were directly responsible for the deterioration of the world position of the USSR, its deepened isolation, and, therefore, for the desperate crisis of 1928.

Banda denies this self-evident fact by mystifying the historical process: "The revolution having failed to transcend national barriers, and hemmed in on all sides, swept back into the USSR with redoubled force and, on the backs of an exhausted working class and a decimated party completely disrupted the precarious equilibrium of forces established in the post-Lenin era."

He does not say *why* the revolution failed "to transcend national barriers" or *why* it remained "hemmed in on all sides." Instead, he transforms, in words, the consequences

of the unmentioned international defeats of the proletariat, caused by the blunders and treachery of the Stalinists, into a positive historical factor, which supposedly enabled the revolution to sweep back into the USSR "with redoubled force"! Thus, according to Banda, the defeats of the international working class actually strengthened the Russian Revolution and contributed powerfully to the construction of socialism inside the USSR!

Banda spends a great deal of time rejoicing over the crisis which was produced inside the Left Opposition by Stalin's swing to the left. He quotes liberally and uncritically from the writings of Isaac Deutscher ("The only honest and objective account.... I am obliged to rely on him") and Max Shachtman ("one of the few writers, besides the late Deutscher ... to make a detailed analysis of the hopelessly contradictory position of Trotsky..."). Both men, for different reasons, attacked Trotsky's analysis of the significance of the change in Stalin's line.

In the essay "The Struggle for the New Course," Shachtman sought to prove that Trotsky's characterization of the Soviet Union as a workers' state, albeit degenerated, was untenable. Shachtman was already well on his way toward becoming a Cold War anticommunist and defender of US imperialism. In the second volume of his biography of Trotsky, *The Prophet Unarmed*, Deutscher, a lifelong opponent of the Fourth International, was propagating his well-known opinion that Stalinism was a revolutionary force, a position which he had first advanced in his 1948 biography of Stalin and which evidently played a role in influencing Pablo. Without bothering to reconcile the conflicting standpoints from which Shachtman and Deutscher argued (though, insofar as they both endow the bureaucracy with an independent historical role, there is an internal connection between the two), Banda makes use of their attack on Trotsky. Of course, he does not hesitate to add his own distinctive falsifications when necessary.

Likening Trotsky to a "blind ignoramus," Banda claims that he refused to recognize the importance of Stalin's left turn.



Not surprisingly Trotsky's equivocal position created a major crisis in the Left Opposition and led to its disintegration and disorientation....

Contrary to the traditional version peddled by Trotsky's defenders and apologists, the Left Opposition was not destroyed by Stalin's persecution. It was destroyed from within by its inability to formulate a correct policy and to make an objective scientific analysis of the Stalin regime....

Trotsky's goose was well and truly cooked.

We will soon come to what Banda attempts to palm off as "scientific analysis." But first let us deal with the crisis in the Left Opposition. Parenthetically, let us note that Banda, who announced in his "27 Reasons" that the International Committee had been destroyed, now discovers that the Left Opposition met the same fate long before. He always judges the fate of a revolutionary organization on the basis of the judgments and actions of those who betray it. Just as he concluded that his own desertion sealed the fate of the International Committee, Banda claims that the Left Opposition was destroyed by those who capitulated to Stalin, i.e., Zinoviev, Kamenev, Radek, Piatakov, Preobrazhensky, etc.

Hailing the desertion of the renegades, Banda states, "They argued, correctly, that the left turn was not episodic and, that, without abandoning the struggle for party democracy or renouncing their past insistence on the necessity for industrialisation and collectivisation they must recognize their own mistake and the need to support Stalin in a concrete practical way."

What a horrifying falsification of history! In fact, each of the capitulators dragged themselves through the mud and renounced all that they had previously fought for. The real nature of their capitulation is unintentionally revealed in Banda's own words. If the capitulators did not renounce their past program, if they were simply recognizing that Stalin was carrying through the line of the Left Opposition, what "mistakes" were they called upon to recognize? In fact, supporting Stalin "in a concrete practical way" meant denouncing Trotsky, renouncing the entire fight that had been waged since 1923 by the Left Opposition against the Stalin leadership, repudiating the Platform of the Left Opposition, and attacking the theory of permanent revolu-

tion. It meant the total abandonment of any struggle to restore party democracy.

Banda does not mention that all those who deserted the Left Opposition, renounced their principles and capitulated to Stalin were politically destroyed, first morally and then physically. The movement founded by Trotsky survived all of them. By the time the Left Opposition had been transformed into the Fourth International, GPU bullets had already smashed through the skulls of virtually all the capitulators.

Among those whom Banda cites as having capitulated to Stalin's left turn is Christian Rakovsky. Once again, the deplorably low level of Banda's grasp of facts is exposed. After Trotsky's deportation in 1929, Rakovsky became the recognized leader of the Left Opposition in the Soviet Union. For four years, he resisted the Stalinists. It was not until 1933, beneath the impact of physical exhaustion produced by wounds suffered in an unsuccessful attempt to flee the USSR and political demoralization produced by isolation and the victory of Hitler in Germany, that Rakovsky surrendered. As Trotsky said, Stalin got Rakovsky with the aid of Hitler! But in 1928-29, Rakovsky opposed any surrender to Stalin in the most vehement terms.

In a statement written in August 1928, entitled "On Capitulation and Capitulationists," Rakovsky wrote scathingly of renegades like Radek and Preobrazhensky, who attempted to justify their betrayal of principles by claiming that Stalin was carrying out the "economic part" of the program of the Left Opposition:

In this way the question of the interpretation of the platform has created two camps: the revolutionary leninist camp, fighting for the implementation of its entire platform (just as formerly the party fought for its entire programme), and the opportunist-capitulationist camp which, having expressed its readiness to be satisfied with "industrialization" and the establishment of collective farms, has not considered the fact that without the realization of the political part of the platform, the whole of socialist construction could be sent toppling.<sup>1</sup>

Rakovsky then examined the outlook of the capitulators

and stressed the importance of the principled stand of the Left Opposition:

The opposition, having left the party, is not free in certain of its sectors from the faults and habits that the apparatus has fostered over the years. Above all it is not free from a certain amount of philistinism. There remains particularly the bureaucratic atavism that is tenacious among those who formerly stood nearest to the leadership in the party itself or in the Soviet apparatus. It has been infected partly by party-card fetishism, as opposed to loyalty to the party; it is not free, lastly, from the pernicious psychology of the falsifiers of leninism which that same apparatus has fostered. Therefore none of the capitulationists who desert the opposition will fail to kick Trotsky with their hooves (shod with nails provided by Yaroslavsky and Radek). In other circumstances the legacy of the apparatus would easily have been eliminated. In today's conditions of intense pressure, it breaks out on the body of the opposition in the form of a rash of capitulationism. It was inevitable that a sifting out of the people who had not thought the platform through to its conclusion should take place, of those people who dreamt of peace and comfort but naively excused themselves on the pretext of a desire to take part in "momentous struggles." Furthermore, this sifting out may make the ranks of the opposition more healthy. In it will remain those who do not see the platform as some sort of restaurant menu from which each selects a dish according to his or her taste. The platform was, and remains, the battle flag of leninism, and only its full implementation will lead the party and this proletarian country out of the blind alley into which they have been driven by the centrist leadership.

Whoever understands that the struggle of the opposition is the "momentous struggle" upon whose results future socialist construction, the fate of Soviet power and the world revolution depend, will not leave his or her post.

One single idea is repeated as a leitmotiv in the theses of the capitulationists: the need to return to the party. A person ignorant of the history of our expulsion from the party might believe that we ourselves left it and went into exile of our own accord. To pose such a question is to transfer the responsibility for our being in exile and outside the party from the right-centrist leadership to the opposition.

We were in the party and wished to remain within it, even when the right-centrist leadership denied the very necessity of drawing up any sort of five-year plan and calmly urged the "integration of the kulak into socialism." We wish to be in the party all the more now that a left turn is taking place within it (even if in only one part of it), and now that it is faced with accomplishing gigantic tasks. But there lies before us a question of an entirely different order: are we prepared to deviate from the leninist line in order to pander to centrist opportunism? *The greatest enemy of the dictatorship of the proletariat is an unprincipled attitude towards convictions.* If the party leadership — resembling the Catholic church, which exacts a return to Catholicism from dying atheists — extorts confessions of alleged errors and the renunciation of their leninist convictions from oppositionists, and in so doing loses all right to be respected, then the oppositionist who changes his or her convictions in the course of a night merits only complete contempt. This practice fosters a garrulous, shallow and sceptical attitude towards leninism; what is more, Radek has become a typical representative of such an attitude, generously strewing his philistine aphorisms to left and right on the subject of "moderation." Shchedrin's characters are eternal. Every epoch of socio-political decline reproduces them, changing only their historical costumes.<sup>2</sup> (Rakovsky's emphasis.)

In another article, Rakovsky analyzed the significance of the party regime for the construction of socialism in the USSR, answering those who argued that the measures taken by Stalin to develop a planned economy diminished the importance of the Opposition's demand for a return to inner-party democracy:

In 1923 the opposition foresaw that enormous damage to the dictatorship would derive from the distortion of the party regime. Events have fully justified its prognosis: the enemy has climbed in through the bureaucratic window.

Now more than ever it is necessary to say loud that the correct democratic party regime *is the touchstone of a genuine left course.*

There is an opinion that has spread among even steadfast revolutionaries that the "correct line" in the sphere of economics must "of itself" lead to a correct party regime. This view, which has pretensions to being dialectical, turns out to be one-sided and anti-dialectical, since it ignores the

constant changes of position of cause and effect in the historical process. An incorrect line will aggravate an incorrect regime, and the incorrect regime will in its turn deform the line still further.<sup>3</sup>

If any mitigating excuse is to be made on behalf of those Left Oppositionists who capitulated to Stalin in 1928, it could be said that they did not know what lay ahead: the long nightmare of purges, trials, and executions which were organized by Stalin in the mid-1930s. But Banda is thoroughly informed about the monstrous crimes carried out by the bureaucracy and the tragic fate of all those who capitulated. He knows the bloody human toll, numbering in the millions, exacted by the bureaucracy as it completed its destruction of the Bolshevik Party and usurped political power from the proletariat.

And yet, condemning Trotsky's refusal to capitulate to Stalin, Banda writes: "Rather than face up to reality honestly and with a measure of humility, Trotsky adapted more and more to the ultra-lefts who were exclusively obsessed with forms of proletarian (Soviet and party) democracy and the superstructure of the workers state and ignored or rejected the profound changes going on in its base."

The meaning of Banda's contemptuous attitude to the nature of the party regime is that he does not believe that Marxist consciousness is of any importance whatsoever in the building of a socialist society. He does not bother to define the political theories which, in the absence of any semblance of party democracy, guided the practices of the Stalinist bureaucracy. For all his talk about Trotsky's "indifference" to dialectical logic, Banda worships the blind pragmatism of Stalin and the "epistemology" of his GPU murderers!

Glorifying the "unprecedented ferocity and brutality" of the "deformed dictatorship," Banda declares that Stalin "crushed the peasantry and smashed the right wing" — as if the economic problems of the USSR, rooted in the historic legacy of backwardness, could be simply overcome through the administrative "liquidation of the kulaks as a class." As Trotsky explained and as the whole subsequent experience of the USSR, Eastern Europe and China has confirmed, the differentiation of the peasantry is an organic process which

can be halted only on the basis of the most sweeping revolution in the technique of agricultural production.

Collectivization by itself does not solve the problem. Under conditions in which the collectives must compete among each other for an inadequate supply of technologically advanced agricultural machinery, a condition which persists to this day, the collectives are themselves subordinated to the process of differentiation.

Only when the Soviet Union is able to fully partake of the resources of the world economy, a development which depends upon the revolutionary overthrow of world imperialism, will the traditional backwardness of its agricultural sector be overcome. Until then, the inevitable social differentiation, which cannot be halted by the methods of police repression, continuously recreates, if only in embryonic form, the economic basis of the regeneration of capitalist elements within the countryside, even under the cover of the collective farms.

Such complex questions are of no interest to Banda. Instead, he asserts that the policies of Stalin represent the inexorable working out of historical necessity. This is in keeping with his general class outlook. In one form or another, petty-bourgeois theoreticians attribute to the Soviet bureaucracy an independent historical role. In some cases (Shachtman, Burnham, anticommunist academicians), they see the bureaucracy as the creator of a new form of exploitative, totalitarian society. In other cases (Pablo, Deutscher), they attribute to the bureaucracy a vital and progressive role in the establishment of socialism. But whether from the "right" or the "left," they all reject the decisive and independent role of the proletariat in the overthrow of capitalism and the building of a socialist society.

Banda takes the position of Deutscher to the most extreme conclusion. Whereas Deutscher at least formally recognized that Stalinism was the product of specific conditions bound up with the extreme economic backwardness inherited by the Bolsheviks from czarist Russia, combined with the international defeats of the proletariat, Banda places no such limits on the recognition of the historic necessity of Stalinism. He explicitly rejects Trotsky's analysis of the specific material

conditions and contradictions underlying the growth of the bureaucracy. Banda, his pen dripping malice, says,

Trotsky never even grasped the real historic significance of the rise to power of Stalin.

Trotsky saw Stalin as the bureaucratic defender of the party apparatus and the usurper of proletarian democracy, within the USSR, but what the apparatus represented in the historical development of the first workers state — Stalin's bureaucratic repression notwithstanding — always seemed to elude Trotsky, and exasperated his enlightened followers. Trotsky saw the Stalinist bureaucracy as an accidental phenomenon which arose because of a specific conjuncture of forces internationally and nationally. *It seemed incomprehensible that the Stalin faction could represent the working class.* (Emphasis added.)

The real social basis of Stalin's faction, Banda asserts, was "the developing working class emerging out of a backward peasantry." Under these conditions, the bureaucracy, functioning as a surrogate for the immature proletariat, played a progressive historical role:

Trotsky's inability to grasp the contradictory nature of Stalin's regime — brutally centralizing administration and subordinating Soviet legality and democracy to the needs of primitive socialist accumulation and the — yes — progressive tasks of developing nationalized industry and collectivised agriculture, raising health and educational standards and conducting a revolution in science and technology — this failure led to a fatal scepticism about the future evolution of the USSR and a deliberate attempt to exaggerate the power of the restorationists within the USSR.

Only one conclusion can be drawn from this assessment: the destruction of Soviet democracy by the bureaucracy and the elimination of Stalin's opponents were historically-necessary measures, adopted to further the construction of socialism in the USSR. And this is, in fact, the position taken by Banda. Trotsky, he asserts, was objectively an enemy of the USSR. "The only charitable thing to be said about Trotsky's conclusions," Banda writes, "was that they led inescapably to counterrevolutionary implications!" His opposition to Stalin "predictably" led "to the adoption of political

attitudes which were distinctly suspect if not downright reactionary."

In other words, the Moscow Trials were not only politically justified. There are reasons to believe, based on Banda's evaluation, that Trotsky could have been guilty of the crimes — terrorist plots against the Soviet leadership, sabotage, espionage for the imperialists, etc. — attributed to him by Stalin's prosecutor, Vizhinsky! And all the other former members of the Left as well as Right Opposition (Bukharin, Rykov, Tomsky) might well have been part of the secret "terrorist parallel center" supposedly created by Trotsky! While thus legitimizing the killings, Banda is far too delicate to speak of the mass executions of the Old Bolsheviks between 1936 and 1938. He offers instead the following description of the fate of Lenin's collaborators and the consolidation of the bureaucracy's totalitarian rule: "In fact the prodigious development of the USSR's productive forces and the — albeit bureaucratic — defence of its property relations by Stalin's group *led inexorably to the withering away of the Left and Right Oppositions* and an uninterrupted strengthening of the Centre." (Emphasis added.)

Banda sums up his indictment of Trotsky as follows:

What Trotsky refused persistently to recognize in its awesome and contradictory reality was that Stalin — the proletarian Bonaparte — represented the revolution in permanence. The police-bureaucratic negation of NEP, the political atomisation of the peasantry, the industrialisation and collectivisation of the peasantry, the creation of a massive new working class and intelligentsia — all these developments were the expression of a historical law.

Here we have political bootlicking in its most disgusting form. The growth of the bureaucracy and the Bonapartist dictatorship of Stalin is rapturously depicted as the expression of historic necessity. Stalin, the pockmarked enemy of the theory of permanent revolution, is transformed, in Banda's twisted brain, into the personification of the "revolution in permanence." In similar manner, the man who is forever identified with the extermination of Lenin's closest collaborators and the physical destruction of the Bolshevik Party and its cadre, is described as the "proletarian



Bonaparte." It is of no concern to Banda that the Bonapartist rule of Stalin was built up and consolidated through the liquidation of all forms of proletarian democracy. The strangling of the Bolshevik Party and the soviets was the means through which the bureaucracy usurped political power.

However, this usurpation did not signify the complete destruction of the dictatorship of the proletariat, which continued to exist in a degenerated form. Trotsky explained that Soviet Bonapartism arose on the basis of a degenerated workers' state. But that did not make Stalin a *proletarian* Bonaparte, a combination of words which makes no political sense whatsoever. Stalin was the embodiment of the political will of the rapacious privileged bureaucracy. As Trotsky so brilliantly explained:

The increasingly insistent deification of Stalin is, with all its elements of caricature, a necessary element of the regime. The bureaucracy has need of an inviolable super-arbiter, a first consul if not an emperor, and it raises upon its shoulders him who best responds to its claim for lordship.

...

Caesarism, or its bourgeois form, Bonapartism, enters the scene in those moments of history when the sharp struggle of two camps raises the state power, so to speak, above the nation, and guarantees it, in appearance, a complete independence of classes — in reality, only the freedom necessary for a defense of the privileged. The Stalin regime, rising above a politically atomized society, resting upon a police and officer's corps, and allowing of no control whatever, is obviously a variation of Bonapartism — a Bonapartism of a new type not seen before in history.

Caesarism arose on upon the basis of a slave society shaken by inward strife. Bonapartism is one of the political weapons of the capitalist regime in its critical period. Stalinism is a variety of the same system, but upon the basis of a workers' state torn by the antagonism between an organized and armed soviet aristocracy and the unarmed toiling masses.<sup>4</sup>

Banda does not refute Trotsky's analysis. He simply throws around words like "historical law." But he never defines the nature of the "historical law" which supposedly sanctifies

Stalin's monstrous betrayals of the Soviet and international working class. If Banda wishes to claim that Stalin's crimes were carried out in the interest of socialism and represent the realization of "historical law," then he is simply legitimizing the worst slanders of the professional anticommunists against socialism.

Of course, the workings of historical law are manifested in the Stalinist regime, but not in the manner suggested by Banda. The fundamental law of Marxism is: "A development of the productive forces is the absolutely necessary practical premise (of Communism), because without it want is generalized, and with want the struggle for necessities begins again, and that means that all the old crap must revive." <sup>5</sup>

The Stalinist regime, in keeping with this historical law discovered by Marx, represented the recrudescence of the "old crap" present in all societies in which the necessities of life are subject to unequal distribution. The existence of inequality and the inevitable social antagonisms which accompany it requires the policeman (gendarme) and other official armed bodies of repression. They ensure the delivery to a small portion of society the lion's share of the necessities of life, not to mention the even scarcer luxuries. In Soviet society, the regulation of inequality in the sphere of consumption, in which the bureaucratic caste enjoys a privileged existence, is the basis of the state as a special apparatus of violence and coercion. Again we quote Trotsky:

We have thus taken the first step toward understanding the fundamental contradiction between Bolshevik program and Soviet reality. If the state does not die away, but grows more and more despotic, if the plenipotentiaries of the working class become bureaucratized, and the bureaucracy rises above the new society, this is not for some secondary reasons like the psychological relics of the past, etc., but is a result of the iron necessity to give birth to and support a privileged minority so long as it is impossible to guarantee genuine equality.<sup>6</sup>

From this historical law, we deduce yet another, which may be cited as the epitaph of Stalinism: "It is impossible to construct socialism on the basis of an isolated national economy."

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## M. Banda Embraces Stalinism (III)

Banda crowns his denunciation of Trotsky with the following statement:

This brings me to the severest indictment of Trotsky's claim to be a dialectical materialist. It is expressed explicitly in the title of the third section of the chapter "Social Relations in the Soviet Union," [from *Revolution Betrayed*], which reads "The Question of the Character of the Soviet Union Not Yet Decided by History." This, in my opinion, constitutes a fundamental revision of dialectical materialism, in particular the law of transformation of quantity into quality and the development from the lower to the higher. Trotsky here implicitly rejects the conception that the October Revolution was not accidental but a lawfully determined moment, a historical leap, in an objective process which was irreversible. The revolution could be distorted and undermined, but it could not be destroyed. In other words there could be no prospect of restoring capitalism after the Civil War and the industrialisation and collectivisation. *Revolutions themselves are the verdict of history upon outlived socio-economic formations and cannot be reversed by some arbitrary action of a state or the policies of a particular government.* The October Revolution occurred only because the contradictions of world imperialism had reached such a pitch of intensity that the capitalist chain broke at its weakest link. As Lenin remarked, it was the chain, and not just the link, that broke. On this simple and incontrovertible fact rests our revolutionary optimism.

The above passage is an illustration of what Banda palms off as the "logical" method of analysis — as opposed to the supposedly inadequate "historical" method employed by Trotsky. According to Banda, the October Revolution was, in its logical essence, a transformation of quantity into quality, or, if you will, a movement from the "lower" to the "higher." Therefore, inasmuch as his "logic" will not tolerate a movement from the "higher" to the "lower," the overthrow of the October Revolution is impossible. The nationalized property relations cannot be destroyed and capitalism cannot be reintroduced.

This analysis proves only that Banda has no understanding whatsoever of either historical materialism or dialectical logic. His stupidities stem from the fact that he has failed to notice that the USSR does not exist as a logical category in the sphere of abstract thought, but within the real material context of a world economy and interconnected system of nation states, some of which are not only armed with nuclear weapons but also realize a higher productivity of labor. Imperialism, Banda's "logic" notwithstanding, has not reconciled itself to the removal of a large portion of the globe from its sphere of direct exploitation.

For Trotsky as well as for Lenin, the survival of the first workers' state ultimately depended upon the extension of the socialist revolution into the advanced capitalist states of Western Europe and the United States. That the proletariat could hold power indefinitely and create a socialist society without the overthrow of capitalism in the bastions of world imperialism was viewed by the Bolshevik Party, prior to 1924, as a utopian conception.

Banda's assertion that the planned economy cannot be overthrown within the USSR and capitalism restored because this would violate the law of development from "lower to higher" as well as that of the transformation of "quantity into quality" vividly exposes the idiocy which follows from an attempt to deduce historical development from empty logical forms.

We use the word "empty" not only to denote their lack of concrete historical content, but also because these terms of logic are employed by Banda without any scientific compre-

hension of their genuine theoretical significance as thought forms, i.e., moments of the abstraction process, which express man's ever-deepening cognition of the complex properties of nature, and whose rich intellectual content is derived from and bound up with a long history of philosophical and conceptual thinking. The mastering of these logical categories, which may be likened to the scaffolding of theoretical cognition, invariably proceeds in conjunction with the most detailed and exhaustive study of natural and social phenomena. But for Banda, these logical terms are nothing but decorative phrases which serve only to conceal his ignorance. His method, we must again insist, is the type of ignorant parody of Hegelian dialectics which Engels held up to ridicule more than a century ago in his classic *Anti-Dühring*.

In one section of that work, Engels explained that Marx did not theoretically deduce the real historical movement from the expropriation of the immediate producers to the expropriation of the expropriators from the dialectical law of the negation of the negation.

On the contrary: only after he has proved from history that in fact the process has partially already occurred, and partially must occur in the future, he in addition characterizes it as a process which develops in accordance with a definite dialectical law. That is all. It is therefore once again a pure distortion of the facts by Herr Dühring when he declares that the negation of the negation has to serve here as the midwife to deliver the future from the womb of the past, or that Marx wants anyone to be convinced of the necessity of the common ownership of land and capital ... on the basis of credence in the negation of the negation.<sup>1</sup>

Stripped of any real historical content, very little is added to knowledge by referring to the movement from lower to higher. At any rate, one can think of many material processes where development has been from the higher to the lower — for example, the fate of the Workers Revolutionary Party and the political evolution of Michael Banda! Moreover, one can remain well within the intellectual boundaries of vulgar evolutionism on the basis of this "law." When imposed upon history without any concrete analysis of a definite social process, it has nothing whatsoever to do with dialectics. The

real contradictory nature of the October Revolution cannot be adequately grasped in this way.

Certainly, the October Revolution represented the birth of a higher principle of social and political development, but, given the heritage of Russian backwardness, its economic foundations represented a far lower level of development than that through which Western Europe and the United States had already passed. The great historical paradox of the Russian Revolution, anticipated and explained by Trotsky on the basis of his theory of permanent revolution, was that the proletarian dictatorship, the most historically-advanced state-form, was first established in one of the most backward countries. Thus, the very elementary categories of higher and lower do not exist in a relation of fixed antithesis, but, like all opposites, are inseparably connected. This interconnectedness of opposites and their mutual interaction and interpenetration was first established in logic by Hegel, but it required the intellectual revolution carried out by Marx before this dialectical principle could be demystified and utilized as a tool of scientific theoretical inquiry and historical materialist cognition.

Comparing the economic development of the USSR not only to that of czarist Russia prior to 1917, but to the entire capitalist world, Trotsky analyzed a historical contradiction that cannot be pigeonholed in fixed categories like lower and higher:

The dynamic coefficients of Soviet industry are unexampled. But they are still far from decisive. The Soviet Union is lifting itself from a terribly low level, while the capitalist countries are slipping down from a very high one. The correlation of forces at the present moment is determined not by the rate of growth, but by contrasting the entire power of the two camps as expressed in material accumulations, technique, culture and, above all, the productivity of human labor. When we approach the matter from this statistical point of view, the situation changes at once, and to the extreme disadvantage of the Soviet Union.

The question formulated by Lenin — *Who shall prevail?* — is a question of the correlation of forces between the Soviet Union and the world revolutionary proletariat on the one hand, and on the other international capital and the

hostile forces within the Union. The economic successes of the Soviet Union make it possible for her to fortify herself, advance, arm herself, and, when necessary, retreat and wait — in a word, hold out.... Military intervention is a danger. The intervention of cheap goods in the baggage trains of a capitalist army would be an incomparably greater one. The victory of the proletariat in one of the Western countries would, of course, immediately and radically alter the correlation of forces. But so long as the Soviet Union remains isolated, and, worse than that, so long as the European proletariat suffers reverses and continues to fall back, the strength of the Soviet structure is measured in the last analysis by the productivity of labor. And that, under a market economy, expresses itself in production costs and prices. The difference between domestic prices and prices in the world market is one of the chief means of measuring this correlation of forces. The Soviet statisticians, however, are forbidden even to approach that question. The reason is that, notwithstanding its condition of stagnation and rot, capitalism is still far ahead in the matter of technique, organization and labour skill.<sup>2</sup>

Banda's use of the categories quantity and quality are equally bereft of dialectical insight. He tells us that the law of transformation of the former into the latter has guaranteed the perpetual existence of the nationalized property relations of the USSR. But this claim is contradicted by the very way it is formulated by Banda, who states, "The revolution could be distorted and undermined, but it could not be destroyed."

The law of the transformation of quantity into quality alerts us to the fact that there must exist a definite historically-determined limit beyond which the persistent distortion and undermining of the revolution by the bureaucracy may be transformed into the destruction of the Soviet Union as a workers' state. History demonstrates that at several points in the past, the policies of the Stalinist bureaucracy have brought the USSR to that limit: first, in 1928, when the opportunist adaptation of the Stalinists to the kulaks produced the immediate danger of internal counterrevolution; and, second, in 1941, when the repeated betrayals of the world revolution opened the doors to the Nazi invasion, which came close to militarily defeating the USSR.

Banda, however, dismisses the tragic consequences of the victory of fascism in Germany and the defeats of the European proletariat — all produced by the policies of the Soviet bureaucracy — by proclaiming, “Stalingrad was history’s shattering reply to Trotsky’s skeptical prognosis about Stalin’s regime.” What a perverse distortion of reality. At the cost of 20 million lives, the Soviet working class was able to overcome the catastrophic consequences of Stalin’s treachery and incompetence. Only a miserable lackey would assign to the bureaucracy credit for the heroism of the working class and the power of the nationalized property relations. Moreover, only a conscious traitor or idiot would dare suggest that the defeat of Hitler’s armies after they had conquered 500,000 square miles of Soviet territory and taken control of 90 percent of Stalingrad proves that the USSR cannot be destroyed in the future by the military actions of world imperialism.

Trotskyists do not need to be lectured by Banda on the historical significance of social revolutions in general and the October Revolution in particular. It is slightly ridiculous for Banda to claim that Trotsky did not recognize the lawful character of the socialist revolution in Russia, given the fact that he was the first Marxist to foresee, more than a decade before 1917, that the tasks of the democratic revolution in that country could be carried through only by the proletariat and that therefore the Russian Revolution could only triumph as a socialist revolution.

But Banda attempts to convert the concept of *historical inevitability* into a sort of lifetime money-back guarantee by proclaiming that revolutions, as the objective product of the historical process, “cannot be reversed by some arbitrary action of a state or the policies of a particular government.” This, Banda tells us, is the foundation of his “revolutionary optimism.”

One has only to imagine the practical conclusions that would flow from an acceptance of Banda’s historical perspective, which is permeated with the typically petty-bourgeois mixture of fatalism and complacency. Resting on history’s irrevocable “verdict,” workers influenced by Banda would have no reason to concern themselves at all with politics,



either that of the imperialists or that of the leaders of the international labor movement.

In a revealing passage, Banda defends his fatalism by comparing the Russian to the French Revolution and then asserting that Trotsky's claim that "the political expropriation of the working class by the Stalin bureaucracy represented the first step to capitalist restoration has about as much truth and objectivity as the prejudice that the coming to power of Napoleon and the dissolution of the Jacobin Communes represented the first step to the restoration of Feudalism in France!"

Banda's analogy is worthless because he ignores the fundamental difference between the bourgeois and socialist revolutions. The property relations of capitalism are generated spontaneously; those of socialism must be introduced and built up consciously.

In the French and all other classic bourgeois revolutions, the political overthrow of the old feudal aristocracy was preceded by the spontaneous development of capitalist property relations. Capitalist relations in France had implanted themselves spontaneously as a direct consequence of the growth of the productive forces and world trade, and had generally reached a fairly advanced level of development before 1789. The bourgeoisie played the decisive and leading role in the economic life of France prior to the revolution. The French aristocracy and the political forms through which it ruled had become an impediment to the further development of the country along capitalist lines.

Despite the fact that the leading sections of the bourgeoisie generally played a conservative role through much of the revolution, the dictatorship of the Jacobins, the political representatives of the radical petty bourgeoisie, could do no more than complete the fundamental tasks of the democratic revolution and give way to the rule of the bourgeoisie.

Once the French Revolution had destroyed feudal relations in the countryside and transferred land to the peasantry, the economic foundation of the ancien régime was irrevocably destroyed. No Marxist has ever claimed that Napoleon Bonaparte's rise to power represented the first stage of a return to feudalism. Quite the opposite: Marxists have always

defined Bonaparte as a bourgeois dictator who consolidated the essential conquests of the French Revolution. The popular social base of his rule was the very peasantry to whom the revolution had given land. The very use of Bonapartism as a political term is bound up with the recognition of the specific role the first Napoleon played in stabilizing bourgeois rule.

The fundamental difference in the historical development of the proletariat and bourgeoisie has been explained by generations of Marxists. The proletariat remains an exploited class until it, through the conscious historical act of socialist revolution, overthrows the bourgeoisie, establishes its political dictatorship, and creates entirely new forms of property relations. Neither nationalized industry nor central planning are generated spontaneously. Both require the highest level of political consciousness among masses of workers who must be directly involved in the organization and direction of the new society.

Moreover, the existence of nationalized industry and planning does not put an end to the ongoing and spontaneous generation of capitalist relations and commodity production, especially in a backward country with a large peasantry. The triumph of socialism is not assured until the victory of the proletariat in at least a few of the main imperialist countries has established, on a world scale, the definite superiority of the planned economy over capitalist chaos. Conversely, as long as economic planning remains confined to historically-backward countries which still lag far behind the capitalist economies in terms of labor productivity and technique, it is impossible to deny the danger of capitalist restoration.

The qualitative difference between the bourgeois and socialist revolutions emerges with particular clarity when they are approached from the standpoint of the role of leadership. Marxist historians recognize the outstanding role played by such bourgeois revolutionists as Cromwell and Robespierre. But it would be impossible to seriously claim that the fundamental course of either the English or French bourgeois revolutions would have been radically changed if Cromwell had emigrated, as he had originally planned, to North America, or if Robespierre had remained a provincial lawyer in Arras.

As Plekhanov explained, the rising bourgeois class would have found other candidates, perhaps less brilliant, to represent its interests and carry through the task of delivering the death blow to the feudal order. Conversely, even had Robespierre been a more brilliant and farsighted man, given the conditions which existed in July 1794, he could not have prevented the ultimate downfall of his particular faction inside the Jacobin party and the triumph of the Thermidorians. His fall was, so to speak, predetermined by the contradiction between his petty-bourgeois constituency, lacking an independent class perspective, and the bourgeois character of the revolution.

However, it is beyond debate that the Bolsheviks would not have conquered power in October 1917 if Lenin had not succeeded in returning to Russia the previous April and carrying through, in the face of strong opposition from Stalin and others, a change in the party program: from the perspective of the democratic dictatorship to that of permanent revolution. However "doomed" by history, the overthrow of capitalism in Russia ultimately depended on the presence of Lenin, who provided the crucial subjective link in the objective chain of events.

The historical role played by the Bolshevik Party in general and by Lenin in particular is the most crushing refutation of Banda's passive fatalism. In the preparation, victory and consolidation of the socialist revolution, the conscious factor plays a greater role than in any other epoch and event in history.

That is precisely why Trotsky insisted in the opening paragraph of the *Transitional Program* that the historical crisis of mankind is, in the final analysis, the crisis of revolutionary leadership of the working class. The fact that capitalism has become, in an absolute historic sense, reactionary and that the objective prerequisites for socialism are fully present, places before mankind only two possibilities: either the working class will, through the development of the necessary leadership, overthrow imperialism and establish socialism on a world scale, or mankind will suffer a relapse into barbarism.

Contrary to the antidialectical sophistries of Banda, history is not a one-way superhighway to paradise. Unless the working class is able to solve the tasks posed by history, mankind faces the danger of a retrogression far more catastrophic than that which followed the collapse of the Roman empire. For the new dark ages would be ushered in by a nuclear holocaust, which would leave upon this planet nothing with which to reconstruct civilization, let alone permit it to attain new heights.

Banda's nationalist perspective accepts the Stalinist position that the fate of the USSR does not depend upon the world revolution: "We must therefore say categorically and emphatically that history has decided the character of the USSR and that the USSR is a society in transition to socialism."

The Soviet Union, according to this view, will go forward from "advanced socialism" to communism regardless of the outcome of the class struggle in the United States, Europe and Japan. The fact that the USSR lags in many crucial areas far behind the capitalist countries is of no importance.

Because he evaluates the bureaucracy from an entirely nationalist perspective, Banda minimizes the international implications of Stalin's policies, attributing the victory of Hitler in Germany merely to "stupidities" and defining the conscious treachery of the Kremlin bureaucracy in France and Spain as "blunders." Banda waxes indignant over Trotsky's definition of the Stalinists as agents of world imperialism. "Why should the bureaucracy become 'the organ of the world bourgeoisie?,' " he writes. "Where was the evidence?"

The evidence consists precisely in those very world-historic betrayals that Banda shrugs off as "stupidities" and "blunders." The refusal of the Communist International to in any way criticize, let alone condemn, the policies which had led to the greatest catastrophe in the history of the international workers' movement, the victory of Hitler, signified that the Stalinist parties were beyond political reform. The evolution of the Comintern after the defeat of the German working class confirmed Trotsky's assessment. The program of socialism in one country had become transformed into the conscious subordination of the interests of the

international working class to the Soviet bureaucracy's defense of its own privileges. Popular frontism — the policy of open class collaboration by the national Communist Parties — was the expression of the transformation of the Stalinist bureaucracy into a defender of the capitalist order on a world scale.

To speak of Stalin's policies in Spain as a "blunder" is certainly not a blunder on Banda's part. He knows very well by what methods Stalin's agents worked to ensure the destruction of the Spanish proletariat's struggle against Franco. Thousands of GPU agents were dispatched to Spain to liquidate revolutionary opponents of Stalin's alliance with the reactionary bourgeois democrats and right-wing socialists. He knows that Stalin's defense of the Spanish bourgeois state and private property was motivated by the Soviet bureaucracy's desire to conclude an alliance with British and French imperialism. He also knows that one reason underlying the mass murder of Old Bolsheviks between 1936 and 1939 was Stalin's desire to convince the democratic imperialists that the Soviet bureaucracy had broken irrevocably with the policy of international socialist revolution.

During the past half century, there have been more than enough illustrations of the fact that the Soviet bureaucracy functions on a world scale as an agency of imperialism, defending the international status quo under the code-words of "peaceful coexistence" and "detente." The comprehensive presentation of the evidence of its role as an agency of world imperialism would require a multivolume encyclopedic history of the Kremlin's foreign policy since the end of World War II, with separate supplemental volumes being devoted to the policies of each national Communist Party.

Banda climaxes his wretched capitulation to Stalinism with an extraordinary declaration of confidence in the political integrity of the Soviet bureaucracy:

If restoration didn't exist it would be absolutely necessary for Trotsky to invent it! The whole of Soviet history — during and after Stalin — testifies against this infantile leftist speculation and points in the opposite direction. Despite enormous difficulties, setbacks, contradictions, crimes and excesses the Soviet working class and the new

post-revolutionary aristocracy of labour which governed the country and administered the planned economy fought unsparingly to prevent any restoration of capitalism and to develop and expand the nationalised property. Anyone who has read the reports of the 27th Congress and the Central Committee statements of the CPSU on the problems of Soviet industry and agriculture will readily reject with derision the lurid fantasy of Trotsky. *There was and is no prospect of the Soviet aristocracy of labour transforming itself into a capitalist class; nor is there the slightest possibility of new laws of property inheritance coming into force.* In fact what we are seeing is a gradual liberalisation of bureaucratic rule and a decentralisation of economic administration in line with the vast and unprecedented changes in Soviet industry, science and technology — and the working class. (Emphasis added.)

Banda never specifies the nature of the “crimes and excesses” to which he makes a fleeting reference. Even more serious, he never offers anything by way of a precise social analysis of the origins and evolution of the “new post-revolutionary aristocracy of labor.” He does not even attempt to identify the material bases of this “aristocracy” and the source and nature of its privileges. Did not “crimes and excesses) have something to do with the accumulation of its ill-gotten gains? Banda is also silent on the question of the exact relations between the working class and the labor aristocracy.

As usual, his haphazard use of terminology gets Banda into all sorts of trouble. He tells us that this “aristocracy of labor” has “fought unsparingly to prevent any restoration of capitalism.” But it is an ABC of Marxism that all labor aristocracies fight unsparingly only in defense of their own privileges. As Trotsky explained many times, the Soviet bureaucracy “defends” the planned economy in the same way that the labor aristocracy in the imperialist centers defends the trade unions: only insofar as its material privileges are bound up with its continued existence.

Given the fact that Banda believes in the unsparing devotion of the Soviet aristocracy to communism, it should come as no surprise that he is firmly convinced that these

upstanding bureaucrats would never contemplate anything so selfish as the legalization of property inheritance.

To answer Banda, let us cite a recent speech given in the Soviet Union by a real expert on the morals and outlook of the Stalinist bureaucracy — General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev! Speaking at the long-delayed January 1987 meeting of the CPSU Central Committee, he offered this description of the workings of the higher levels of the bureaucracy:

Serious discrepancies kept piling up in planning. The authority of the plan was being subverted by subjective approaches, imbalances, instability.... We cannot overlook the just indignation of working people at the conduct of *these senior officials*, in whom trust and authority has been vested ... who themselves abused their authority, suppressed criticism, *sought gain and some of whom even became accomplices in, if not organizers of, criminal activities....*

The stratum of people, some of them young people, *whose ultimate goal in life was material well-being and gain by any means, grew wider. Their cynical stand was acquiring more and more aggressive forms, poisoning the mentality of those around them and triggering a wave of consumerism.* The spread of alcohol and drug abuse and a rise in crime became indicators of the decline in social mores.

*Disregard for laws, report-padding and encouragement of toadyism and adulation had a deleterious influence on the moral atmosphere in society....*

Real concern for people, for the conditions of their life and work and for social well-being were often replaced with political flirtation — *the mass distribution of awards, titles and prizes.* (Emphasis added.)

Gorbachev's speech is a devastating portrait of the social scum that constitutes the upper echelons of the bureaucracy. The only possible conclusion that can be drawn from this description — which, one can be sure, barely scratches the surface of what is actually going on — is that the ruling strata consists in large part of elements that are in their social outlook imbued with capitalist values and organically hostile to those political and economic institutions rooted in the October Revolution which place restrictions on their ability

to accumulate and preserve private wealth. To believe that these elements retain the slightest subjective devotion to the planned economy is to indulge in the most pathetically naive illusions. If it were possible to make a scientific measurement, one would find no less devotion to personal luxury and wealth among the top layers of the Soviet bureaucracy than among those capitalists listed in the Fortune 500.

It is significant that Gorbachev refers specifically to the "young people," the sons and daughters of the bureaucracy, who clearly view the privileges accorded to their parents as their own birthright. That they should not be permitted to inherit all that their parents possess is a fundamental source of their hatred of whatever remains of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

From his perch at the top of the bureaucratic order, Gorbachev looks down and sees a Boschian spectacle of hedonistic corruption, and is aware of the disgust and hatred that these depraved scenes evoke in the proletariat: "We cannot overlook the just indignation of the working people at the conduct of those senior officials," he warns. It is only the bureaucracy's fear of the working class that holds it back from legalizing inheritance and breaching the property forms established in 1917.

This fear remains a potent political force, but not a decisive one. The subjective greed of the bureaucracy is not the sole social basis of restorationism. We have previously referred to the relationship between the chronic backwardness of the agricultural sector and the spontaneous process of social differentiation among the peasantry, even within the collective farms. There are other forms through which the development of capitalist tendencies manifest themselves in the USSR.

Statistics recently published in the USSR indicated that as many as 17 million people are directly engaged in some form of private enterprise through the massive, semi-official black market. The economic force represented by this black market has been indicated by the recent decision of the Gorbachev regime to endow it with a legal status. At the same time, the Kremlin asserted that it would not permit the hiring of wage labor by the newly legitimized entrepreneurs.



But the very fact that the issue is raised is a strong indication that the purchase of labor power by private entrepreneurs is no longer an unknown social phenomenon in the USSR. The generally low income levels guarantee that there are people who are willing to accept wages "under the table" from such employers. Moreover, the recent right given to factory managers to fire workers in the name of efficiency and labor discipline means that there will be unemployed workers who will be compelled to sell their labor power through the medium of the black market.

These decisions are part of sweeping changes in economic policy that threaten to greatly accelerate the growth of capitalist tendencies inside the USSR. A new draft law that was approved by the central committee in January 1987 will make work collectives, according to a Tass report, "full-fledged masters of their enterprises and will independently decide practically all matters related to the production and social development of a mill or factory."

The managers of these independent collectives are to be given the right to develop direct ties with firms from capitalist countries, without operating under the traditional constraints imposed by the existence of the state monopoly on foreign trade. The central committee has also decided that private citizens should be given the right to start and manage a factory or enterprise.

It is obvious that this form of decentralization, implemented within the traditional context of "generalized want" and inequality, will provide the bureaucracy with new and unprecedented opportunities to enrich itself. The very emphasis placed on rewarding local "initiative" and on distinguishing between productive and unproductive enterprises will tend to sanction the accumulation of private wealth in forms that will make the traditional corruption that flourished under Brezhnev appear primitive.

Above all, by legitimizing direct trade connections between individual factories with the USSR and the capitalist enterprises, the doors are being swung open for unprecedented capitalist penetration of the Soviet economy. What will take place under the banner of "decentralization" will be an ever more open alliance between European, North

American and Japanese capital with a growing layer of manager-entrepreneurs inside both industry and agriculture.

These measures expose the deeply reactionary content that underlies the cosmetic reforms instituted by the Gorbachev regime. While seeking to preempt the independent movement of the Soviet working class against the bureaucracy, Gorbachev is, in fact, systematically undermining the basic gains of the October Revolution.

Banda chooses to ignore all these tendencies, knowing full well that they shatter every premise upon which he bases his repudiation of Trotskyism. He even concedes that "if there was truth in Trotsky's prognosis then he would have been absolutely justified in calling for the political revolution led by a new party — the Fourth International — to prevent capitalist restoration."

Once again Banda does not offer a refutation. He merely asserts: "But this is certainly not the trend in the USSR, China, Yugoslavia or Indo-China. And this is precisely why the long-awaited political revolution in the USSR has not materialised and *will never do so.*"

These are the words that will certainly be inscribed on Banda's tombstone. It sums up the political demoralization that underlies his repudiation of revolutionary politics. He has become convinced of the immortality of Stalinism, or, to put it somewhat differently, he has completely written off the working class as a revolutionary force.

There is no need to reply at length to Banda's stupid testimonials in behalf of the Chinese and Yugoslav Stalinists. For the last decade, the Chinese bureaucracy has exploited the popular reaction against the catastrophic consequences of the Cultural Revolution to justify the most sweeping concessions to capitalist elements inside the country and to imperialism internationally. (Let us just note in passing that these right-wing policies were set into motion by Mao himself in 1971.)

The Chinese bureaucracy's signing an agreement promising to guarantee the preservation of capitalist property and investment in Hong Kong proves that the bureaucracy by no means considers that its own survival is unconditionally bound up with the existence of nationalized industry and

state planning. It is prepared to oversee, on behalf of world imperialism, the extraction of surplus value from the working class.

It is impossible to dismiss the far-ranging implications of such an agreement. It clearly represents the beginning of a new and even more direct relationship between the Stalinist bureaucracy and world imperialism. One has only to consider what would happen in a Stalinist-administered Hong Kong in the event of a strike carried out by workers against a capitalist-owned enterprise. The bureaucracy would intervene against the workers in direct defense of imperialist interests. Thus, to claim that the Chinese-British agreement on Hong Kong does not represent a tendency toward capitalist restoration is a transparent lie.

As for Yugoslavia, the depth of its dependence upon the financial credits of the IMF and imperialist banks is well known. Since 1950, when Tito sided with imperialism during the Korean War, Yugoslavia has openly kept one foot in the capitalist camp. For Banda to claim that there is no tendency toward personal accumulation of wealth in Yugoslavia can only mean, at best, that he is badly misinformed about life in the Balkans. Against the backdrop of economic backwardness and poverty, there are to be found individuals with considerable private fortunes.

Finally, Banda's invocation of Indochina as a further refutation of Trotskyism does not get him very far. It is an obvious fact that Vietnam is organically incapable of realizing, within the framework of a nationally-isolated and backward economy, a socialist reconstruction of society. There is a great deal of evidence that it has not even been able to harmoniously integrate the northern and southern portions of the country. But there is another issue which Banda never bothers to pose, although it is central to the socialist development of Indochina.

Some 12 years after the defeat of American imperialism, there is absolutely no indication that a socialist federation of Indochina, let alone one that includes China itself, is emerging. The Vietnamese intervention in Kampuchea has not produced any economic integration of the two countries. As for China, far from encouraging the development of a new

socialist union with Indochina in the aftermath of the defeat of the United States, it has attempted to invade Vietnam and to this day collaborates with imperialism against it.

Banda does not refer to this state of affairs, for to do so would require an objective analysis of the class forces which underlie these reactionary policies and would demolish his claim that the Stalinist bureaucracies are engaged in the construction of socialism.

He tells us, however, that the political revolution against Stalinism never has and never will materialize, and, that "this irrevocable fact of history... explains why the Fourth International was proclaimed but never built. There was simply nothing to build on."

Banda's inability to foresee the future is equaled only by his capacity to lie about the past. Trotsky's concept of a proletarian revolution which would be directed against the bureaucracy's monopoly of political power, while preserving the social forms of property established through the overthrow of the bourgeoisie, correctly anticipated the future course of developments. Since 1953, when the East German working class rose up against the Stalinist regime, the political revolution has ceased to be merely a historical prognosis. Just as the Paris Commune of 1871 vindicated the theoretical projections of Marx, the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 vindicated those of Trotsky. And since then, there have been the experiences of Czechoslovakia in 1968, Poland in 1970 and, finally, the Polish Solidarity movement of 1980-81.

Trotsky has not been proven wrong; rather, Banda has repudiated the political revolution and become an apologist and political agent of the Kremlin bureaucracy. Nearly 30 years ago, Banda wrote passionate denunciations of the Soviet bureaucracy's massacres of Hungarian workers in Budapest and the executions of Pal Maleter and Imre Nagy. Now he repeats the slanders of the Kremlin and implies that opposition to the Kadar regime represents an attempt "to sell bourgeois democracy to the Hungarian people." That is not all. He also equates the defense of Solidarity and opposition to the Jaruzelski dictatorship with support for "a Western oriented 'pluralist democracy' backed by the Vatican and supplied by European and US loans."

As a matter of fact, the regime of General Jaruzelski was installed for the very purpose of restoring imperialist confidence in the credit-worthiness of Poland and assuring repayment of the massive external debt to the Western banks that had been accumulated during the 1970s by the Stalinists. The most recent five-year plan of the Polish regime has been modified in accordance with demands made by the International Monetary Fund.

\* \* \*

In 1986, when Banda's "27 Reasons Why the IC Should Be Buried" was published in the *Workers Press* and used as the political platform of the Workers Revolutionary Party's break with the International Committee of the Fourth International, Banda still pretended that he was a Trotskyist. This assertion was not challenged by a single member of the WRP outside of those in the minority who supported the International Committee.

Toward the end of that document he declared:

This statement is a critical re-examination of the whole of the IC including myself which I feel is unpostponably urgent in view of the distortion, misrepresentation and half-truth put out by the IC clique which is hell-bent on resuscitating a stinking corpse.

For my part, I recognise that the WRP today is in the same position that the Bolsheviks were in 1915-1917 and that in order to build the FI it is necessary — as an indispensable precondition — to bury the IC. To let it fester for another single day would be tantamount to the worst betrayal of Trotsky and Trotskyism.

The man who called for the destruction of the International Committee — a proposal which the Workers Revolutionary Party sought immediately to implement — has now publicly proclaimed himself a political agent of the Soviet bureaucracy.

This development, which can come as no surprise to those who have followed our lengthy analysis of Banda's "27 Reasons," has at least one positive aspect: it renders unnecessary any special concluding section summing up the results of this protracted examination. There is no need for us to sum up Banda when he has so clearly summed himself

up in his latest document "What Is Trotskyism?" which is nothing more than an explicit declaration of the counterrevolutionary positions that were implicit in "27 Reasons."

In finishing with Banda, it is enough to say that here is a man who, having once been a revolutionary, has capitulated miserably to the pressure of the most reactionary class forces. Defeated and demoralized, he attempts to justify his personal weaknesses and to legitimize his moral collapse by denouncing all the principles embodied in the Fourth International. Banda pathetically imagines that he, while wallowing neck-deep in mud, can make himself appear great if only he shouts slanders against the towering figure of Leon Trotsky. He has forgotten, it seems, that Trotsky's historical stature was not reduced even a centimeter by the slanders and falsification of the most powerful counterrevolutionary bureaucracy in history. His own sordid efforts have proven no more successful. Banda set out to bury the International Committee, but the ICFI has buried him.



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11. In the preface to *Labor and Communism* (Princeton University Press, 1977), Cochran wrote: "It is a pleasure to acknowledge the assistance that I received in writing this book. My thanks go to Zbigniew Brzezinski, then director of the Research Institute on International Change at Columbia University for the senior fellowship that he and his colleagues on the administrative board awarded me beginning with the fall semester of 1973, and for his unflinching consideration during the period of my residence." (p. xi)

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#### 18. James P. Cannon's "Open Letter"

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2. Cliff Slaughter, ed., *Trotskyism Versus Revisionism: A Documentary History* (London: New Park Publications, 1974), vol. 1, *The Fight Against Pabloism in the Fourth International*, pp. 298-301.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 301.
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11. International Committee of the Fourth International, "How the Workers Revolutionary Party Betrayed Trotskyism, 1973-1985," *Fourth International*, vol. 13, no. 1, Summer 1986, pp. 47-49.
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13. *News Line*, 2 November 1985.
14. SWP, *Towards a History*, part 3, vol. 4, p. 222.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 222-28.

#### 19. After the Split

1. Cliff Slaughter, ed., *Trotskyism Versus Revisionism: A Documentary History* (London: New Park Publications, 1974), vol. 4, *The International Committee Against Li-*

*quidationism*, p. 20.

2. Banda claims that he waged a bitter struggle against Healy's adaptation to Massali Hadj, leader of the MNA, in the mid-1950s. He writes tormentedly of having been assigned to write an article in the *Labour Review* in support of the MNA. "On refusing to do so [I] was instructed by Healy and the editorial board of *Labour Review*, by a vote of 20-1, to do so. I will confess it was one of the most shameful episodes in my political career."

Banda's memory is once again playing tricks on him. There is absolutely no trace of the shame of which he now speaks in the *Labour Review* article to which he refers. Written in 1958 (not 1957!), Banda's article was a carefully documented analysis of the class forces represented by the different tendencies within the Algerian national movement. He traced the historical origins of both the MNA and the FLN, documenting the long association of Massali Hadj with the French and Algerian workers' movement. It also reviewed the checkered history of the FLN. The article made political concessions to the MNA, and failed to anticipate its subsequent betrayal of the national struggle. However, the crimes of the MNA do not change the class nature of the FLN and its own subordination of the national movement to the interests of the Algerian bourgeoisie. While stating that the MNA was not a socialist party, Banda's article mistakenly referred to the MNA as the "precursor of a revolutionary party" (March-April 1958, p. 44). Its conclusion, however, did state: "This much is certain. The future of Algeria does not rest with the FLN and its apologists but with the working class and the landless peasantry. Only they can carry through the political and economic liberation of this martyred land."

"The tasks of Marxists is not to apologize for and defend the accomplished fact but to hasten the day when the Algerian working class through its independent organizations will rise up as the true protagonist of Algerian freedom" (Ibid.).

What Banda really rejects in that article is not the confidence extended to Massali Hadj, but its defense of the role of the Algerian proletariat.

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13. Ibid., p. 8.
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16. Ibid., pp. 18-19.
17. Ibid., p. 20.

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3. SWP Discussion Bulletin, A-20, September 1954, p. 1.
4. Ibid., pp. 10-11.
5. Ibid., p. 5.
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8. Ibid., p. 12.
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10. National Education Department Socialist Workers Party, *Education for Socialists: What is American Fascism?* July 1976, p. 42.
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12. James P. Cannon, *Notebook of an Agitator* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1973), pp. 355-56.
13. Ibid., pp. 357-58.

## 21. The SWP in Retreat

1. *Militant*, 3 July 1943.
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3. SWP Discussion Bulletin, vol. 18, no. 12, October 1957, p. 4.
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  17. SWP Resolution, *Fourth International*, May-June 1950, p. 90.

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6. Cannon, *Speeches for Socialism*, pp. 171-73.
7. Leon Trotsky, *The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International: The Transitional Program* (New York: Labor Publications, 1981), p. 33.
8. SWP, *The Struggle to Reunify*, vol. 2, p. 54.
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10. Ibid., p. 59.

## 23. The Impact of the Hungarian Revolution

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