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# Hate Trotskyism, Hate the Spartacist League

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—a bulletin series consisting of material  
hostile to Trotskyism and the Spartacist  
League

## BULLETIN NO. 3

- Reprint of “What Is Spartacist?”  
by Tim Wohlforth, Second Edition (June 1973)
- Reprint of “The Wohlforth League: Counterfeit  
Trotskyists”  
from *Spartacist* No. 17-18, August-September 1970
- Reprint of “The Workers League and the Interna-  
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- Reprint of “Confessions of a ‘Renegade’: Wohlforth  
Terminated”  
from *Workers Vanguard* No. 61, 31 January 1975

## Preface

In this third bulletin of the "Hate Trotskyism, Hate the Spartacist League" series we have reproduced the second edition of Wohlforth's "What Is Spartacist?" along with his introduction. Although Wohlforth stated (in the introduction) that "nothing has been changed," in comparing the first edition with the second we found no less than 194 editorial alterations in the body of the document and more in the footnotes. These are all minor editorial changes and not major political changes, but are certainly more than "nothing." This deliberate and written lie is typical of Wohlforth's lack of concern for truth, a trait evident also in the many inaccuracies/lies in the text of the pamphlet itself. A Spartacist reply to this pamphlet, published while the material was being printed in its original form in the Workers League's Bulletin, is also included.

We have also reprinted his statement "The Workers League and the International Committee" in its original form just as we received it, and our commentary on the latter ("Wohlforth Terminated") from Workers Vanguard.



# What Is Spartacist?

by Tim Wohlforth

Bulletin  
Pamphlet  
Series **6**

"If we subtract everything accidental, personal and episodic, if we reduce the present groupings in struggle to their fundamental political types, then indubitably the struggle of comrade Abern against comrade Cannon has been the most consistent. In this struggle Abern represents a propagandistic group, petty-bourgeois in its social composition, united by old personal ties and having almost the character of a family."

Leon Trotsky, *In Defense of Marxism*, page 61

This series originally appeared in the weekly *Bulletin* from June 22, 1970 to August 10, 1970.



Second Edition, June 1973

Published by: Labor Publications, Incorporated, Seventh Floor, 135 West 14th Street, New York, New York 10011.

## Introduction

Over the past 25 years the world Trotskyist movement has been passing through a difficult period of internal struggle. During the inflationary postwar boom—the product of the capitalists fear of confrontation with the working class and in no sense a solution to the crisis of capitalism—powerful revisionist and liquidationist tendencies developed within the Fourth International. Michel Pablo, the postwar International Secretary of the Fourth International, was the leading figure for many years in these revisionist efforts to liquidate the movement.

The position of Pablo and Pabloism was to abandon the **Transitional Program** upon which the Fourth International was founded in 1938. He held that the **Transitional Program** was not applicable because of the "new reality" of the postwar period. This theory of a "new reality" was based on impressions of the permanence of the postwar capitalist boom, the apparent strength of Stalinism, the continuing struggles in the colonial countries which were led by petty bourgeois nationalist forces, and the very slow and largely politically reformist life of the mass of workers in the metropolitan countries. All this was seen as permanent and the underlying crisis of capitalism was totally ignored. On this basis, the construction of Trotskyist parties was abandoned in favor of putting pressure on existing Stalinist, reformist and nationalist

leaderships.

Thus, Pabloism abandoned the Marxist method for impressionism and empiricism. It turned its back on the working class and represented a petty bourgeois tendency sensitive to the pressures of the capitalist class itself.

The 25 year struggle against Pabloism, which is by no means over, has been the central theoretical preparation of the world Trotskyist movement for the new period of international capitalist crisis and class struggle we are now in so deeply. As the International Committee has analyzed all along, the very factors which made for the boom and the slow movement of the working class in the past period, that is, the inflationary monetary arrangements worked out at Bretton Woods in 1944, today have a revolutionary impact on capitalist relations, ripping apart the compromises between classes and requiring preparation for the fundamental struggle for power itself. Now we can actually construct mass revolutionary parties in a number of countries.

This new situation makes our study of the past development of the Trotskyist movement all the more urgent. The struggle against revisionism led to the formation of the International Committee of the Fourth International in 1953. The IC has carried this struggle forward ever since, thereby maintaining the continuity of Trotskyism, of Bolshevism, into this new period when mass parties can be built. For this very reason, the struggle against revisionism is our theoretical capital. It is our development of Marxism from Trotsky's day, so essential in equipping and training our movement for revolutionary tasks today.

Theoretical development over the whole past period has been painfully slow, reflecting the isolation of the Trotskyist movement from revolutionary struggle because of the boom. Nevertheless, theoretical development has taken place. In fact, the very slowness of this development has made the lessons learned over this period that much more important and substantial. The issues in dispute with revisionism were and are the central issues: the nature of the period, perspectives, the party itself, Marxism.

The struggle with James Robertson and his Spartacist League is a significant chapter in the history of this 25 year struggle against revisionism. Robertson was originally a supporter of the International Committee. He was among those who originally opposed the Socialist Workers Party's embracing of Pabloite revisionism in 1961. However, he broke with the International Committee at the precise point where opposition to the SWP's revisionism required a break with the

method of the SWP itself. Through such a break, the development of an alternative Marxist perspective could be put forward.

Robertson was among the first to carry through a formal break with the revisionism of the SWP only to embrace it in another form. He has been followed by many others: Lynn Marcus and his Labor Committee, Art Fox and his United National Caucus, Harry Turner and his **Vanguard Newsletter**, and now Passan and Gregorich and their Class Struggle League. Robertson was the granddaddy of them all. On all the fundamental questions, they agree with Robertson. In turn, Robertson still agrees fundamentally with the SWP.

The main tenets of Robertson's position go back to his original break with the International Committee in 1962. Robertson did not begin from the continuity of world Trotskyism which has taken the form of the bitter struggle of the International Committee against revisionism. He recognized neither the theoretical importance of that struggle, nor the importance of the international movement constructed through that struggle, nor above all the actual content of what was learned through that struggle. For this reason, Robertson has no perspective for the present period. Lacking a perspective, Robertson exists for the purpose of existing. He maintains a circle of people who function as middle class radicals.

## INTERNATIONALISM

The publication of Leon Trotsky's **The Spanish Revolution (1931-39)** is of the greatest importance not only for the light it sheds on the Spanish events and revolutionary strategy in general but particularly for the discussion of differences with Andres Nin and the Spanish Section of the International Left Opposition. The dispute with Nin was over the same issue.

Trotsky, over a long period, battled Andres Nin's refusal to really concern himself with the day to day life of the international movement, to seek to learn from this life, and in turn to develop a policy in Spain which was rooted in international perspectives. He accused Nin of carrying out a passive, propagandistic existence which he covered with arguments about the exceptional character of events in Spain. In the end, Nin fused with the centrist Maurin and constructed the POUM whose first act was to embrace the Popular Front in Spain. The degenerate, centrist role of the POUM made a critical contribution to the defeat of the Spanish Revolution.

Trotsky writes:

*"If the Spanish Oppositionists remained unacquainted with this struggle (the internal struggle of*

the International Left Opposition—T. W.) then that must be considered a great shortcoming. We cannot develop true revolutionists without giving the young communists the chance to follow the day-to-day elaboration of the Bolshevik policies not only in the Spanish section but in the other sections of the International Opposition as well. Only in this manner can we gain experience, build and strengthen the revolutionary consciousness. This is precisely the most important part of the democratic party regime that we strive to establish.”

“Undoubtedly you agree that just as socialism cannot be built in one country, a Marxist policy cannot be pursued in one country alone...”

“It is true that I have myself met some comrades in the ranks of the Left Opposition who speak of the internal ideological struggles in a belittling sense, calling them ‘quibbles, intrigues.’ Such comrades have not learned in the school of Marx and Lenin. In order to prepare ourselves for the great struggles, we must learn to be steadfast and uncompromising in all the current principled questions, even when they are of a minor character.”

And:

“The Spanish ‘Left Communists’ (Andres Nin, Juan Andrade and others) have more than once tried to parry our criticism of their collaborationist policies by citing our lack of understanding of the ‘special conditions’ in Spain. This is the customary argument put to use by all opportunists. But the first duty of a genuine proletarian revolutionist lies in translating the special conditions of his country into the international language of Marxism, which is understandable even beyond the confines of one’s own country.”

And finally:

“Nin was concerned with the ‘independence’ of the Spanish section, that is, with his own passivity, with his own petty political comfort; he didn’t want his captious dilettantism to be disturbed by great events.”

As this pamphlet thoroughly documents, Robertson broke with internationalism in 1962 when he refused to subordinate his tactical differences to the International Committee. Despite this, in 1966 he was invited to the Conference of the International Committee in an effort to break him from his nationalist position. At that Conference he once again refused to submit to international discipline and was expelled

from the IC. Ever since, his role has been one of seeking unprincipled alliances internationally which are aimed against the IC.

It is significant to note the position he took at the 1966 Conference. He stated to that Conference that there no longer existed a Fourth International. All that existed were several factions calling themselves “Fourth International” each of which contained some worthy elements. His hope was to bring about some sort of regroupment of these forces on the basis of Spartacist.

This position meant a rejection of the struggle of the International Committee against revisionism by equating the IC with the revisionist splinters. It meant therefore a denial of the theoretical capital accumulated in the struggle of the IC against all forms of revisionism. This in turn placed Spartacist on national rather than international grounds. As Trotsky insists in his Spanish writings, a revolutionary perspective can only be developed on an international basis in our epoch. So Spartacist proceeds without such a perspective as do the revisionist Pabloite leadership of the SWP.

In the period since Robertson developed his approach, several other individuals and tendencies have proceeded along the same basic path. The recent opposition within the SWP has been dominated by such forces. First came David Fender who formed his own faction within the SWP called the Communist Tendency. Fender’s position was to pick at all the weaknesses of the early years of the Fourth International, even under Trotsky, maintaining that the Fourth International was nothing but a “junkyard.” There was Trotsky who was a great man and there was the Fourth International which, for Fender, was nothing but opportunist and sectarian. He denied what Trotsky felt was so important—the great theoretical capital the movement gained in the struggle against all these tendencies.

Fender’s position was then taken up and amplified further by a faction that arose within the other opposition tendency, the Proletarian Orientation Tendency. This faction, led by Barbara Gregorich and Phil Passan, was the subject of our recent pamphlet: *In Defense Of Trotskyism: An Answer To Those Who Villify Our History.*<sup>6</sup> Passan and Gregorich have simply expanded upon Fender’s arguments, bringing them up to date. They oppose the split of the International Committee from the Pabloites in 1953, attacking the strength of James P. Cannon, not just his weaknesses. To Passan and Gregorich, there is no history. Everything preceding their entry into politics is one mass of confusion and mistakes. And then there

was Passan and Gregorich!

Recently this faction split with the SWP and started unity negotiations with the Vanguard Newsletter group of Harry Turner. They have one difference with Turner. They no longer support the Fourth International even in name. It is all over and done with. We must, Gregorich and Passan tell us, now form a Fifth International! Turner sees this matter of the Fourth International as essentially a tactical difference and certainly no stumbling bloc to unification.<sup>7</sup> At least we can say of the SWP that they adhere in name to the Fourth International and its traditions.

The evolution of the Organization Communiste Internationaliste (OCI), former French section of the International Committee, must also be discussed. In 1966 the OCI stood with the IC against Robertson, voting for his expulsion. It voted for a motion clearly stating that the Fourth International had not been destroyed and that the IC represented its continuity. But it refused then, as it had during the earlier struggle with the SWP, to train its cadres in the theoretical lessons to be learned from this struggle against Robertson. So it was only a short time before the OCI itself followed the road of Robertson.

In July 1971, the OCI sponsored a youth conference in Essen, Germany. At that conference, the Socialist Labour League, supported by the Workers League and others, put forward an amendment which insisted that it was necessary to struggle for dialectical materialism in the course of building revolutionary youth organizations. The OCI opposed this motion and voted with the youth organization of the POUM! This was the beginning of the break of the OCI from the IC.

During August of 1971, the POR in Bolivia carried out a policy identical with that of the POUM during the Spanish Revolution. It refused to conduct itself independently of the Stalinists and the nationalists and it ended up asking the military, under Torres, for arms. The result was that it contributed to the defeat of the Bolivian working class. When the policies of Lora were sharply criticized by the Socialist Labour League and the Workers League, the OCI used this as its pretext to split from the International Committee.

The future evolution of the OCI bears out its political affinity with Nin historically and Robertson today. Having carried through an unprincipled split in support of centrism, the OCI launched a full-scale war on the Fourth International. In June 1972, they held a rump "preconference" of their International Committee together with the Hungarian LRSB, the Argentine Politica Obrera, which supports Lora, and the Israeli

Vanguard group which supports the "Israeli nation." At this conference they declared the International Committee to be finished and reorganized themselves into an "organizing committee" to construct some new international movement in the future. Thus the OCI repudiated the very positions it took against Robertson in 1966.

Clearly the issue of internationalism and the continuity of the Fourth International, which has been central in our differences with Spartacist, are questions of the greatest importance to the development of the Fourth International and the defeat of centrism.

## ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVES

Having broken from internationalism and denying the continuity of the Fourth International, Spartacist cannot develop any understanding of the capitalist crisis and therefore any perspective. It has positions, many of them, but no perspective. It is rooted, as is the SWP, in American national conditions. On that basis, it is unable to construct anything beyond a middle class circle.

This pamphlet documents the opposition of Spartacist to the IC's understanding of the capitalist crisis. On this issue they have always stood with the SWP leadership. As early as 1962, Robertson opposed our perspectives on this critical point. At the 1966 Conference, Robertson proceeded not from the international crisis, but rather from so-called American conditions of working class passivity.

Despite the complete confirmation of the perspectives of the International Committee in Nixon's August 1971 actions and the deepening monetary crisis ever since, Spartacist has persisted in its position. In fact, just as earlier when Spartacist did the hatchet work for the SWP against the IC with the Tate Affair, so today it seeks to suggest to the SWP a rationalization for its bankrupt assessment of capitalism. This is the meaning of the lead article in the March 1973 issue of *Workers Vanguard*. Under a subheading entitled "Monetary Cranks and Catastrophe-Mongering" the Robertsonites write:

*"There are few better proofs of the theoretical poverty of Gerry Healy's Socialist Labour League (SLL) in Britain and Tim Wohlforth's Workers League (WL) in the U.S. than their rote dependence on Lyn Marcus, who is himself at least a creative crackpot. The 15 February Workers Press is headlined 'Capitalism Hits the Dust as Nixon Puts the Boot In.' Discussing the effects of the devaluation, the article states 'For Europe especially it will mean massive recession, the*

*physical destruction of capital and millions and millions of unemployed."*

The theoretical assessment of the capitalist economy was developed by the SLL and the IC as a whole and presented in its 1961 resolution "World Prospects for Socialism" at a time when Robertson himself was a supporter of the IC and Marcus was a supporter of the SWP majority. We owe Marcus no theoretical depth and accept no responsibility for his theories on any question. We are more than happy to defend the position that the capitalist crisis, which has required the recent devaluation of the dollar, will mean recession and unemployment in Europe. We may add it will mean that here as well.

Spartacist then proceeds to state that the "root cause" of the capitalist crisis lies in the productive process and is rooted in the tendency of profit to fall. Next, we are told that the currency crisis is only "one manifestation" of the fundamental crisis of capitalism. West European inflation is another and "most important" manifestation. Then it is added that capitalism will not collapse on its own but must be "pushed" to collapse through the action of the working class. Finally we are informed that in any event there has been a monetary crisis in capitalism ever since the gold standard was modified in the 1930s.

The result of all this is really to assert that there exists a general capitalist crisis and that such a crisis has existed since 1914. Thus, there is no significant difference between one period and another. There is therefore nothing marked about the period we are now in to distinguish it from the past boom period of capitalism. This means we can proceed politically pretty much as we have proceeded in the past with propaganda activities.

It is with this kind of "perspectives" that Spartacist proceeded at its recent conference in November 1972:

*"The reporter characterized the present situation as a 'profitably uneven period' for the SL or a generalized leftward shift internationally. The 'new Nixon' policy has apparently bought some time for the U.S. ruling class by defusing the war issue, thus allowing domestic fears and racial tensions to come to the fore, but within the context of the generalized crisis-ridden instability of the bourgeois order which had exhausted its possibilities of economic development since 1914."*

The truth is that this is no assessment or perspective at all. For Robertson there is no difference between 1926 and 1936 or 1953 and 1973. Within this framework, Spartacist can see little but a clever Nixon buying off the working class at home

while a leftward shift takes place elsewhere.

A serious Marxist assessment proceeds differently. It begins with an understanding of how the capitalist class, faced with a determined working class after World War Two, chose to offset the general tendency for profit to fall while avoiding a direct confrontation with this working class through dollar inflation. The inflation which presently rips through Europe, forcing a confrontation between capital and labor for wages, is itself brought about by the export of American capital to Europe to avoid the falling rate of profit here and itself contributes to the monetary crisis. The very way in which capitalism temporarily avoided the immediate impact of its crisis, and this allowed for a period of economic development, determines the specific manifestation of the renewed capitalist crises today.

Such a specific, rather than abstract, assessment leads to the unavoidable conclusion that today the capitalist class must prepare to crush the working class and the working class must prepare for revolutionary struggle. Such an assessment determines what we do as Marxists to prepare a leadership in the working class for this new period. The assessment of Spartacist, which differs in no essential way from that of the Pabloites, is aimed at avoiding precisely these tasks. Its purpose is to lull to political sleep its followers so that Spartacist may persist in a passive political existence in a new period, which now requires above all the active construction of a leadership in the working class.

## LABOR PARTY

Since Spartacist rejects internationalism and has no understanding of the development of the capitalist crisis, it has no policy for the American working class today. While favoring the formation of a labor party, with various qualifications, it does not campaign for such a party. The labor party remains no more than something needed "in general" and at some point in the future because of the general crisis of capitalism. The labor party demand remains abstract and propagandistic and the Spartacist's role in relation to the political needs of the American working class is abstentionist and passive.

For this reason, Spartacist played no political role during the critical 1972 elections. The elections were simply an event to observe, to barely even comment upon. Spartacist saw no danger in them nor potential for the development of the consciousness of the American working class of its political tasks.

Immediately following the elections, Spartacist held its

third National Conference. It has held only three in ten years! According to the report of the Conference in the January 1973 issue of *Workers Vanguard*, the main political report did not even mention the labor party. Its only mention of the elections was: "The predominant mood as evidenced in the U.S. elections was a shift to the right and the threat of a new anti-red campaign to highlight the end to 'permissiveness'..."<sup>11</sup>

In the article on the financial crisis in the March *Workers Vanguard*, the labor party receives only a disdainful mention:

*"The SLL-WL use Marcus' economic catastrophe-mongering to whip their followers into a hysteria for various campaigns (e.g., the WL's instant labor party, the SLL's 'long marches' against unemployment.)"*<sup>12</sup>

Above all, Spartacist wants to avoid hysteria, frenzy, strenuous activity like marching, campaigns of any sort!

The main attention to the labor party on the part of Spartacist in the recent period is to denounce the Workers League for advocating it. In a number of what we may well call hysterical leaflets and articles, we have been denounced for advocating the formation of a labor party dominated by George Meany and I. W. Abel. They base this accusation on articles in the *Bulletin* during the recent election campaign which reported that Abel and Meany were using the labor party demand as a way of seeking to frighten their erstwhile Democratic Party allies who had so rudely removed them from any power within the Democratic Party. Our position was and is that this development was of considerable importance because it expressed the collision course now developing between the trade union and both the Democrats and Republicans which is wrenching apart the old relationship between the labor bureaucracy and the Democratic Party machine.

We not only do not rely upon the Meanys and Abels to form such a party but we have developed our own independent campaign for a labor party on our political basis. In Chicago in October and again in St. Louis in February, we have proceeded with the construction of a rank and file force within the labor movement committed to fighting for a labor party based on socialist policies and have pitted this campaign against the labor bureaucracy. We have developed a transitional program for such a labor party in our *Case For The Labor Party*, which we have sold to workers in the tens of thousands of copies.<sup>12</sup>

Refusing to assess the capitalist crisis, Spartacist is blind to

the real changes which took place during the 1972 elections. What happened was not a shift to the right but the collapse of labor's alliance with the Democratic Party which left the working class prostrate before Nixon because of the sabotage of the struggle for the labor party by all sections of the labor bureaucracy. The role of Spartacist in this situation was to assist the labor bureaucracy in this by its own abstentionism.

We should note at this point the Spartacist position of "exemplary" activity in the trade unions. Spartacist begins from its position as an isolated "sub-propaganda group." It sees its role as only the development of propaganda. Activity in the trade unions, therefore, is not directed to leading workers in actual struggles against the real and present threats they face.

It is rather as an "example" to show to middle class elements how Spartacist policies might work out in the trade unions should Spartacist ever be in a position to do anything much in the unions. As a result of such an approach, the only union they have consistently worked in for a period of time is the Social Service Employees Union. There, they have been completely wiped out. In actual practice in the unions such a policy serves to bolster the existing labor bureaucracy by refusing to actually battle to remove it.

It is necessary to also note the role of Art Fox on this question of the labor party, which is closely parallel to the evolution of the OCI on the question of the continuity of the International Committee. In 1962 and in 1963, Fox, then a supporter of the International Committee, insisted that the SWP leadership "take the labor party demand off the shelf" and make it a fighting demand within the labor movement. Fox urged that this be central to a turn to the trade unions. We urged such a turn on the basis of the development of the capitalist crisis.

However, Fox refused to proceed politically from the continuity of the International Committee and the theoretical lessons to be learned from its history of struggle against revisionism. He had and has the greatest disdain for theory. To this day he maintains a state capitalist position on the Soviet Union, refusing to defend it against imperialism. So in 1964 Fox broke with the International Committee but remained with the SWP, reflecting a position which was closer to that of the SWP than the IC. Then, in 1965, when the SWP threatened to interfere with his union work, he politically broke with them.

Now we meet Fox again as a leader of the United National Caucus of the UAW. At its last conference, it was this very same Art Fox who led the opposition to the proposal that the

UNC favor the labor party. He did this to maintain relations with the Stalinists and left sections of the labor bureaucracy. In 1962, when the crisis was at a much earlier stage of its development, Fox wanted the labor party off the shelf. Now, in 1973, when the crisis is ripping up social relations in America, and Nixon, with the support of the Democrats, is planning direct blows against the labor movement, Fox wants the labor party back on that shelf, in the back of the closet, with the door padlocked.

Fox wants a labor policy which is active only in the trade union sense and completely passive politically. Thus, his role in the unions is completely reactionary and was prepared for by his turn away from the lessons learned in the internal struggle within the Fourth International.

Here, once again, we can see the close political connection between Spartacist and the SWP revisionists. Where Spartacist simply abstains, covering itself with "left" noises, the SWP runs reformist social democratic electoral campaigns. But these campaigns are further and further removed from the working class as the movement of the working class becomes more and more powerful. As the crisis deepens, bringing with it an ever deeper conflict between the labor movement and the Democrats, the SWP retreats further and further away from the struggle for the labor party. Thus, in the 1960 election campaign, Farrell Dobbs dusted the labor party demand off, removed it from the shelf and utilized it—for the duration of the election campaign. However, in 1972, Linda Jenness subordinates it to a minor demand within the election platform and treats the working class itself with disdain and even hatred.

Now, in the 1973 New York City election campaign, the labor party is removed from the section of the program entitled "For Mass Independent Political Action," remaining only in a section on inflation and unemployment. The position now taken by the SWP is to substitute socialist propaganda campaigns, which are basically social democratic, for the actual struggle in the labor movement for the labor party. In essence, the passive position on the struggle for politics within the working class of Spartacist and the SWP is identical.

## THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

Considering that it limits itself to "exemplary" activity in the trade unions, rejects all hysteria, frenzy, forced marches, long marches, campaigns, panic and worry in general, the question which comes up is exactly what does Spartacist do? The proceedings of its third national conference gives us some

indication. It devotes itself to "the continuing transformation of the SL into the nucleus of the vanguard party..." It views itself, as we have noted in this pamphlet, as neither a vanguard party nor even yet a nucleus of such a party. In fact, it entitled the article on its conference "Towards Construction of the Leninist Vanguard."

What it has proceeded to do, quite independent of any perspective for the working class, is regroup, fuse and merge with various circles, groups, factions and individuals produced primarily by the breakup of Students for a Democratic Society. What all these various factions and individuals have in common with Spartacist is the desire to avoid the new requirements posed by the struggle of the working class. This is sufficient agreement to bring these forces together as a protective association. But it will prove insufficient for holding them together. After all there is an easier way to avoid the class struggle than joining Spartacist—that is, to leave politics altogether.

Spartacist has developed a whole theory to explain this process. Its theory is explained in the following mouthful:

*"These regroupments were in the main the result of the SLPs intersection with subjectively pro-working-class groupings of New Left-derived ex-students who were pragmatically attempting to implement a proletarian perspective."*<sup>13</sup>

Along these same lines Progressive Labor, which had been earlier characterized as "Trotskyism with a prefrontal lobotomy" is described as a group "...whose hard but deformed proletarian line has forced an empirical break with the Stalinist theory of 'two-stage' revolutions."<sup>14</sup>

Dissident Pabloites receive the following characterization:

*"So the several ostensibly anti-Pabloite groups internationally which have emerged from the United Secretariat represent the postwar accumulation of subjective Trotskyists in several major industrial countries, but lacking real continuity in the Leninist movement."*<sup>15</sup>

At this point, Spartacist descends into the realm of subjective sociology and psychology. It begins from its estimation of the subjective and we can only assume unconscious desire of various individuals who make up various groups. This shows the complete theoretical bankruptcy of Spartacist and its reliance on reactionary trends among academic circles.

The Marxist approaches the question of the relation of the subjective to the objective differently. The subjective is the reflection of the objective processes of nature and society in man's consciousness. It is man's conscious thought. As such it

may or may not reflect the material world accurately. In actual fact it is always in conflict with it and at the same time, being a product of nature, it is in unity with it.

The consciousness of a member of Progressive Labor is **Stalinist** consciousness and the consciousness of a member of the United Secretariat is **revisionist** consciousness. The subjective is part of the objective crisis of capitalism and conflict of classes. No matter how hard the idealist seeks to avoid this, it cannot be avoided. Thus, a conflict develops as the crisis of capitalism deepens and the working class moves forward between how the Stalinist and the revisionist sees the world and what actually happens. A conflict develops also, most importantly, between what the Stalinist or revisionist proposes for the working class to do and what the crisis objectively requires be done to defend the working class.

It is therefore the international crisis and the conflict of classes which is the root cause of the crisis that has led to the disintegration of SDS, opposition forces developing within the United Secretariat, and turmoil within the Communist Party and other Stalinist groups. It is not some timeless abstract conflict between objectively Stalinist or revisionist positions and subjective desires to be revolutionary.

While the movement of classes brings forward a crisis within the revisionist camps, it does not resolve that crisis in a progressive direction on its own. For many, the movement of the working class means an end to the old passive radicalism, a break with petty bourgeois circle life. For such forces, leftist noises are a cover for preparation to desert politics and the working class altogether. This is the role of Spartacist and the nature of its regroupments.

## THE PRESS

It is also important to take note of the position of Spartacist on the question of the press. We have proceeded from our first days in 1964 with central attention to the development of the press. With only eight members in the early days, we published the *Bulletin* as a mimeographed paper regularly on a bi-weekly schedule. We now have developed our press to a weekly with a 22,000 circulation, equal to or beyond that of *The Militant*. We have installed our own web offset press which is superior to any press now used by any radical tendency, are the only tendency outside of the Communist Party to have a 100 percent union shop, and are well on our way to publishing our paper twice a week in the fall and daily in the near future. In England, our co-thinkers in the Socialist Labour League have completed three full years of daily publication develop-

ing great strength in the working class around the **Workers Press**.

Spartacist, however, is unimpressed. In fact it views our development of our press as a positive evil:

*"Our conception is directly counterposed to that of the Workers League, for example, which uses a paper as a substitute for winning political authority through real struggle. Unless the press reflects the actual intervention of the party, it cannot be concrete and can only win for itself discredit from militants."*

We might note that considering Spartacist's lack of actual interventions of any sort in the working class for its press to "reflect," its publication of only a monthly paper after 10 years of existence is understandable.

This question of the press is also commented upon in an article on a Buffalo ex-SDS group which recently joined Spartacist:

*"It rejected the 'mass' press of the WL and came to understand the Leninist character of the SL's Workers Vanguard which seeks the penetration of the working class through the most advanced layers rather than tailing after the class at its present level of consciousness."*

In order to bolster its hostility to developing a press which fights for socialist policies in the working class. Spartacist has dug up an isolated quote from Trotsky. The quote is actually inserted into the article reporting the Spartacist League's Conference though it is doubtful that the quote was read to the meeting. This shows the extreme sensitivity of Spartacist on the question of its press. Trotsky is quoted as saying:

*"This task cannot be effectively solved except as a function of the growth of the organization and its cadres who must pave the way to the masses for the newspaper—since it is not enough it is understood, to call a publication a 'mass paper' to have the masses accept it in reality."*

This, of course, is true and this is why we do not claim to have a mass paper, but rather strive to develop such a paper. However, there is more to the quote and it is to the credit of the Buffalo group that when they used the quote in an article they included the complete quote. The sentence just preceding the one quoted states:

*"It is the elementary duty of a revolutionary organization to make its political newspaper as accessible as possible to the masses."*

It is this duty which we have sought to perform ever since we first published the *Bulletin*, even when its circulation was

well under 1000, its frequency only fortnightly, and it was mimeographed. Can anyone seriously suggest that Spartacist has made the slightest attempt to make its paper accessible to the working class?

A political party can only develop if at every point and every day it wrestles with the political problems posed by new developments in the class struggle and the thinking of workers affected by these developments. Without this, there is nothing new to conflict with, to posit against, the old or abstract thinking we have developed in the past. Only in this way can the revolutionary party itself develop its thinking, develop and educate the new forces which come to it in the trade unions and among the youth, and prepare a broad base of support within the labor movement for the struggle now and in the future.

Trotsky wrote about this question in a letter greeting the short-lived organ of the Fourth International in Spain, short-lived because Andres Nin resisted and opposed precisely this conception of the construction of a party:

*"The importance of the weekly consists in that it brings the Spanish Left Opposition face to face with all the current happenings and forces it to give its immediate fighting reply to them. With the creation of the weekly, the Spanish Opposition rises to a higher stage."*

The production of such a paper brings the party in contact with workers each day in the projects, in the factories, in the parks and social centers. Each member of the party must confront the problems raised in selling the paper, selling subscriptions and bringing readers closer to the party. In this sense, a paper is always a dialogue, a discussion with workers, not a one way street. In this way, the party confronts the present level of consciousness of the working class. Without such a paper, the party accepts that level and proceeds quite oblivious to it.

The production of a paper requires a new assessment, a new development of perspectives with each issue. The editors and writers must confront the questions of "What is actually happening?" and "What does it mean?", and above all "What is to be done?" each day.

A paper has many other tasks. It must develop and deepen a polemic against Stalinism and revisionism in each issue for the education of its members and readers. It must bring into the paper the international developments of the working class. It must bring into today the lessons of the history of the working class. It must note and intervene in cultural developments and trends among the intellectuals. It must above all have

content; it must prepare the working class and the advanced layers of the middle class; it must as Lenin said "patiently explain."

The frequency of the press is therefore of the greatest importance. A weekly paper is a necessity for a beginning to come to grips with the problems of a workers' party. It is not always possible to produce a weekly paper but every effort must be made in this direction. However, a weekly paper is still the paper of a propaganda organization, of a circle. It can rarely go beyond commentary.

We have now entered the stage in the development of the international crisis of capitalism and in the development of the Trotskyist movement when we must go beyond what we have been, what we could not help but be. We must now break with the stage of the weekly paper and take up the struggle for the daily paper.

Only a daily paper can develop wide support in the working class, can actually give a lead in the day to day battles now taking place, can lay the basis for the changes in thinking in the party itself which are necessary in order to build in the next period a mass revolutionary party. It is a necessary precondition to the construction of such a party. This is the world historic importance of the launching of a daily paper three years ago by the Socialist Labour League. It marked the end of an era of the "group" and the beginning of a whole new period in the development of the world Trotskyist movement.

This is why the Workers League will not rest content with the publication of the weekly Bulletin. This is why we have taken on the difficult task of publishing a twice a week this coming fall. This is why we will move ahead toward the first daily Trotskyist paper in the United States.

For Spartacist, a monthly publication is sufficient though perhaps a fortnightly would be useful. The paper is not the center of the movement but a side activity. It comments after the fact on what already happened. Thought remains rigid and abstract as no one must, even each week, grapple with new developments. Activity is quite independent of even this thought for after all there is no publication to direct it and report it. Trade union work without the construction of a revolutionary paper must either be nonexistent or syndicalist.

The truth is that the Spartacist press is not aimed at the "advanced workers." It has nothing to do with the working class. It is aimed at the sick middle class radical circles. That is where it is circulated. It is the Bulletin which is directed to and sold to advanced workers, militants in the unions, working class youth turning for the first time to Marxism and seek-

ing to develop as Marxist leaders.

Here again we can see the connection between Spartacist and the SWP. The SWP for many years now has not understood the development of a press. It rests content with a weekly paper although it has considerably more resources than we do to publish a daily. Their paper, *The Militant*, is a commentary sheet of the worst sort as distant for the working class as the Spartacist press. It is a contented and conservative press. The SWP lacks the one critical necessity for a daily paper: revolutionary theory to give it the will and the wherewithall to build one!

For the record, it should be noted that this pamphlet was originally published between June and August 1970, almost three full years ago. Over that three years, Spartacist has issued many, many leaflets in a number of colors all denouncing the Workers League with an ascending crescendo of hysterical epithets. It has, however, never been able to find the time to answer the pamphlet. It is most outspoken on tertiary matters and completely silent when central questions are raised.

This completely new edition has been re-set and printed by 100 percent union labor in our new shop. However, with the exception of this introduction, nothing has been changed.

Tim Wohlforth  
3/17/73

## The Split in the Minority Tendency

In this year of the 100th birthday of Lenin and 30 years since the death of Trotsky the International Committee of the Fourth International is preparing its International Conference, its first since 1966. It was at the 1966 Conference that our split with Robertson's Spartacist League became definitive. It was after this Conference that the American Committee for the Fourth International became the Workers League. Our evolution since that date has only deepened the political gulf between our movement internationally and Spartacist.

It is important at this point, as part of our theoretical preparation for the International Conference, to go back to this period and probe the political depths of the dispute with Spartacist at that time and what prepared it. In seeking to answer the question "What is Spartacist?" we can get a deeper understanding of what we are and why our break with Spartacist represented a qualitative turn in the development of the revolutionary party in the United States.

The recent issue of *Spartacist West* (there never is a recent issue of *Spartacist Proper*) as well as introductory material to various *Spartacist Marxist Bulletins* will be helpful as recent statements of the way Spartacist today still views this period. In the course of a polemic with this material we can get

at the heart of the matter.

"Workers League Lies!" screams the head on the back page of *Spartacist West* which is "Published occasionally by the Bay Area Spartacist League." The occasion this time was March 27, 1970.

The article is an answer to the section of a report on the Workers League Western Regional Conference which appeared in the March 2 issue of the *Bulletin*.<sup>1</sup> That section dealt with the differences between Spartacist and the Workers League as, of course, this recent reply in *Spartacist* also purports to do. Through an answer to this article we will not only be able to clarify once again these differences but far more importantly, to clarify the fundamentals of internationalism and principled politics which differentiate us not only from Spartacist but also from the Socialist Workers Party and other revisionist groups.

"Typically," *Spartacist West* states, "the article in question—a report on a recent Workers League conference—failed to deal with Spartacist politics, but resorted instead to old Stalinist-type tactics of petty slanders and simple distortions of fact."<sup>2</sup> The next sentence then states: "The article charged Spartacist with rejecting internationalism."<sup>3</sup> Is the charge of rejecting internationalism a petty slander or a simple distortion of fact of the old "Stalinist-type" or is it part of Spartacist's "politics?" We feel it to be the very center of Spartacist's politics, with the rest of its political positions actually flowing from this central point. *Spartacist West* does not seem to consider this a political charge at all.

## PROOF

*Spartacist West* then states that we offer as "proof" of their rejection of internationalism the following: "The leading Spartacist delegate to the 1966 conference of the International Committee (Healy's group) in England would not yield to Healy's demand that he admit our supposed, petty bourgeois American chauvinism by apologizing for being unable to attend a session because of extreme fatigue. (See *Spartacist* No. 6)"<sup>4</sup>

If we turn to the actual text of the March 2 *Bulletin* article we get something quite different:

*"Asked what were the differences between Spartacist and the Workers League, Comrade Wohlforth went into the whole history of the opposition inside the SWP in 1961-1964 and the 1966 Conference of the International Committee. He emphasized that the principal difference was the rejection by Spartacist of internationalism. James*

*Robertson, the leader of Spartacist, broke with the International Committee in 1962, refusing to subordinate his differences on tactical questions to the international movement. Once again in 1966, after presenting a series of differences on the conference floor, Robertson retired from the conference, claiming to be tired and refused to attend a session at which a number of comrades wished to discuss his presentation. When asked to apologize to the conference for the action he refused to do so and was expelled from the conference."*

Thus, the accusation on the question of internationalism was based not only on the 1966 Conference but also on the whole history of Spartacist back to the 1961-1964 period inside the SWP. Also what *Spartacist West* reports as our proof as far as the 1966 Conference is concerned is really their own distortion of what actually happened in 1966. But first back to the struggle inside the SWP.

At the beginning of January 1961 the Political Committee of the Socialist Labour League addressed a letter to the National Committee Plenum of the Socialist Workers Party. The letter stated that the differences with Pabloism had deepened, not lessened, noted that the SWP was moving toward Pabloism on several questions including Cuba, and therefore proposed a discussion within the International Committee on these questions. The SWP, at its Plenum, took the opposite course, a course which led it back into the Pabloite camp.

Just prior to this conference a group in the leadership of the YSA who were also party members—James Robertson, Shane Mage and Tim Wohlforth—had presented a statement critical of the position of the SWP leadership on the Cuba question. Thus the opposition of those who were to form the American minority and the SLL, while they touched on the issue of Cuba, really began separately and with an important difference in perspective. The SLL started from the perspective of the development of the whole international movement while the orientation of the American minority started from the perspective of the Cuba question in isolation.

However the collaboration between the American minority and the SLL as well as the French section of the IC did not begin at this point nor was it based on the question of Cuba. It was only after we issued a statement of perspectives to the Political Committee of the SWP on the question of the international movement<sup>5</sup> that we had a basis for common collaboration with the British and French sections of the International Committee. It was this common agreement on international perspectives which was the principled basis upon which we then proceeded to build a caucus of supporters

within the SWP.

Writing in an introduction to the reprint of "In Defense of a Revolutionary Perspective," the document of the minority presented to the June 1962 SWP Plenum, the Spartacist Editorial Board states:

*"The nucleus of the RT (Revolutionary Tendency, the name Robertson gave to his faction after the split in the minority—T.W.) originated in the central leadership of the Young Socialist Alliance, and first came together as a left opposition to the SWP Majority's uncritical line towards the course of the Cuban Revolution. This preliminary dispute culminated in the adoption of a thoroughly revisionist position by the SWP Majority at the June 1961 party convention. The party's theoretical revisionism, together with its abstentionist and opportunist practices, were carried into the party's general international line and began to turn the party away from a revolutionary perspective in the United States as well."*

Here Spartacist confuses the origins of the individuals who led the American minority with the origins of the minority itself. The minority had its origins in common agreement with the majority of the International Committee on international perspectives—not on the question of Cuba. Not only did our tendency not begin with the Cuba question but it is just as incorrect to state that this dispute "culminated" in a "thoroughly revisionist position" at the June 1961 convention and that this "theoretical revisionism" was "carried into the party's general international line..." What Spartacist is saying is that the SWP made a revisionist error on Cuba which then culminated in a more general revisionist position six months later and was then carried into the party's international perspective.

What actually happened was that the SWP leadership presented simultaneously with its Cuba position a whole political perspective and proposal for reunification with the Pabloites at the very plenum in January 1961 at which it also presented its Cuba position. From the very beginning the two were interlocked. Cuba was an expression of an international perspective developed by the SWP leadership through its theoretical degeneration, its turn away from the political struggle with Pablo after 1953, and its pragmatic method.

The SWP majority did not begin with an error on Cuba which it then developed into an international perspective. It began with a method and an international perspective which found its clearest expression in its position on Cuba. The SWP minority became an organized minority as part of an inter-

national tendency with the British and French sections of the International Committee only when it, too, saw Cuba as an expression of a whole international perspective and method known as Pabloism.

It is significant that Spartacist is incapable of comprehending the principled basis upon which the minority actually was formed or what exactly it was fighting. Perhaps Robertson and his friends, who were later to form their own faction separate from the International Committee, were fighting another battle all along?

## CORRESPONDENCE

If we go back to the correspondence of that very early period in which the political collaboration between our minority, which was only in a formative stage, and the Socialist Labour League, the principled basis for that collaboration will become even clearer. In a letter dated January 23, 1961 to Gerry Healy, this writer stated:

*"As I mentioned in my letter to Cliff, I agree with you essentially on the questions you raised in your letter on Pabloism... Thus while there may be seeming agreement at times, in abstract political formulations in real life the gulf is as wide (possibly wider) as it ever was. I am not at all sure there is a complete understanding of this here but I feel Jim understands it."*

The "Jim" referred to in the letter was James Robertson and as the letter made clear this question of Pabloism was being worked out by us within our own minority.

On February 9 this writer wrote:

*"I am sure that you will follow the discussion as it unfolds. I feel that you will note that it does involve some rather important questions for the international movement as a whole. The question of Pabloism is also of vital importance and—from the standpoint of the world movement as a whole it is probably more important than the Cuba question. However, rightly or wrongly, the Cuba question will probably be the pivotal one during the period of the pre-convention discussion here."*

In answer to this we received the following letter:

*"I thank for your letter of February 9.*

*"Of course I quite appreciate that it is unavoidable that a discussion on Cuba will take place in the SWP, especially before the convention. In our opinion, this is not the central problem.*

*"You will be shortly receiving a reply to the latest communication we have had from the SWP.*

Unfortunately it appears that we have differences on many important questions. We consider the Cuba problem entirely subordinate to these. It cannot in any case be cleared up without an understanding of the role of Pabloism."<sup>11</sup>

Then we wrote back on February 20:

"I have just received a copy of your International Resolution ("World Perspective of Socialism"—TW) and have read it thoroughly.

"I want you to know that I feel it is an excellent document and that I am in complete agreement with it. The emphasis on the conscious role of the vanguard and on the central import of the working class of the advanced countries is critically important. In this context I feel you quite properly give weight to the Belgium experience. Cuba is properly dealt with in relation to these broader questions as it should be. The attitude towards Pabloism flows inevitably from the political line of the document as a whole.

"It is my feeling that this document will play a central role in the process of the reorganization of the world Trotskyist movement. This reorganization must quite naturally begin with the reaffirmation of our fundamental politics. I am sure you are aware of the critical role that the SLL must play in this process. While one can, at times, get depressed at the extent of the problems our movement as a whole faces, there is an optimistic side to it all. We are now seeing the beginnings of a process which will lead to the rearming and rebuilding of the International. Luckily for us the relative stability of world capitalism is giving us the time to carry this out—not much time, but some time if we act quickly."<sup>12</sup>

And in answer to this letter:

"Thank you for your letter of the 20th. I am glad that you approve our document. You should encourage every comrade to study it carefully and let us have your amendments and suggestions. It is still but a rough draft of what we want. We are preparing even now some further amendments and additions to it ourselves. The main thing is that it begins a discussion which is long overdue."<sup>13</sup>

Then on March 8, after internal discussion in our tendency and the kind of discussion outlined above with the British, we submitted to the National Committee of the SWP "Memorandum on the World Movement." This document states in part:

"The Open Letter of the SWP and the worldwide

split that it precipitated was an extremely necessary step not only to counter the organizational methods of Pablo but to reaffirm the fundamentals of Trotskyism in the face of the political revisionism of Pablo which lay behind the organizational methods.

"If one looks at Pabloism as a centrist tendency which theoretically minimizes the role of the vanguard and in practice destroys the vanguard then Pabloism has not changed—rather its nature has become far clearer over the past seven years...

"But if one still has doubts about the reflection in theory of the revisionist approach of the Pabloites, one only has to look at the level of the concrete tasks of building the revolutionary party and there is no room left for doubt! Pablo has effectively dulled the revolutionary independence of his own forces and done his best to destroy those vital Trotskyist forces (e.g. England and Japan) that have shown their ability to grow. A political tendency which attempts to destroy the revolutionary vanguard is our mortal enemy no matter how much this tendency vows loyalty to Trotskyism! Just as Lenin had to struggle against every centrist tendency which attempted to dull the revolutionary consciousness, to throttle the independence of the party in order to build the party that led a successful revolution, so must we today follow in his footsteps."<sup>14</sup>

In response to receiving this document Healy wrote:

"Your enclosed statement to the National Committee should assist the discussion...I think your document will be very helpful to the comrades in the SWP."<sup>15</sup>

If we look at this discussion process between our tendency and the SLL, just a section of which is reproduced above, several points become clear. While the American minority began its opposition on the question of Cuba from the very beginning of its discussions with the SLL, the SLL sought to bring our tendency around to an understanding that Cuba was no more than an expression of more fundamental questions. In fighting to bring to our group an understanding of the central importance of Pabloism the SLL leadership was fighting for us to begin with the tasks of the international movement—with the problems of the construction of the Fourth International, not with questions as the SWP majority posed them within the American party.

In this respect it becomes crystal clear that Spartacist long after this period seeks to return to conceptions which the

tendency as a whole broke from in February and March of 1961. At the same time the SWP continues to try to make it appear that the split in the International Committee occurred only over Cuba.<sup>16</sup>

It also makes clear that from that early period the American tendency embraced the International Resolutions of the SLL and IC "World Prospects of Socialism" as well as drafting its own international statement. This statement, while drafted and submitted by this author, was written in consultation with and with the approval of our minority grouping, specifically including James Robertson and Shane Mage.

What also comes through is some indication of the kind of relationship which existed within the international tendency, one based on patient explanation and discussion, not order and fiat as Spartacist and the SWP were to assert later. Above all the British proceeded from the burning necessity of an international discussion to clarify the international movement, recognizing that our young group was in as much need of clarification, perhaps more so, than anyone else. The relations between the SLL and the American movement have always been of this character.

## FACTIONALISM

There is another theme which ran through this correspondence from the very beginning, and in the light of the subsequent dispute in our tendency as well as charges on the part of the SWP leadership, it would be well to reproduce this as well. At every point the SLL proceeded from the perspective of a serious international discussion and counselled us against any form of factionalism. The deeper the political divergence was revealed to be, the greater was the concern of the British for this discussion and that this discussion be unimpeded by organizational and factional considerations.

March 8, 1961:

*"As far as we are concerned the stage is now set for a very thoroughgoing discussion which we feel confident could be carried to a successful conclusion because of the desire of comrades in many countries for such a discussion.*

*"We must be extremely careful not to fritter away our forces in any kind of factionalism. It is my belief that with patience and firmness on principles the world movement can be reorganized within the next two or three years."<sup>17</sup>*

March 22nd:

*"We are very much of the opinion that the*

*discussion in the SWP must be handled in the most objective way. I am speaking as one who has been in many factional struggles and I have no hesitation in endorsing wholeheartedly all the warnings which Jim Cannon has made from time to time against factionalism."<sup>18</sup>*

April 5th:

*"Our anxiety about factionalism does not spring from a misunderstanding of the goodwill which we know exists on both sides, but from the fact that we are seriously perturbed over the fundamental nature of the political differences."<sup>19</sup>*

April 24th:

*"There is one thing you need have no hesitation about so far as the Socialist Labour League is concerned, regardless of whom might designate us as factionalists, this is absolutely wrong, and we will insist upon a political clarification of the issues concerning our international movement. On this we will yield to no one. I feel that we have wasted far too much time up to now in avoiding theoretical clarification...*

*"I agree with your decision to avoid at all costs any aggravation of the factional situation. Please continue with this policy and let there be no talk about anyone breaking from the SWP, no matter how difficult you might feel the situation to be. Your problem is not one concerning the SWP—it is fundamentally an international problem. We need to clarify questions internationally. I fully realise the responsibility of our section in this respect...*

*"We must lean over backwards in our quest for political clarification. You have a great responsibility in this respect and it is a real test to have to face up to the difficulties and the endless discussion at meetings and at the same time bear in mind the great responsibility which we all bear for the future of our American movement."*

*"I think it is a mistake for anyone to imagine that by simply saying we are factionalists it will be possible to avoid discussion on questions on Publoism and centrism in general."<sup>20</sup>*

Such was the advice we received in that early period. We did our very best to carry it out and, of course in the process, made many an error. But our minority as a minority did try to learn through its principled international collaboration in that period. In this respect everyone, including the future leaders of a split from our tendency, Robertson and Mage, can claim credit.

In that period we stood together and in common with the

International Committee. We sought to learn from the IC and first of all learned the central importance of the international movement and the struggle against the revision of Trotskyism internationally in the form of Pabloism. We also learned the importance of patiently putting forward the clarification of principled politics before factionalism and an understanding that this perspective flowed from the international character of the discussion and the long historical origins of the problem of revisionism in the movement.

## SPLIT

It was in the fall of 1962 that the split occurred within the minority tendency, the split which the 1966 International Conference sought unsuccessfully to heal. A discussion broke out within the minority over the nature of the SWP. A faction headed by Robertson declared that the SWP was a "Rightward Moving Centrist Party."<sup>11</sup> It thus sought to change the position the tendency had taken in its resolution "In Defense of a Revolutionary Perspective" submitted to the SWP Plenum a few months earlier in June of 1962.

This resolution was the product not only of an extensive discussion within the American minority but with the International Committee as a whole. The Spartacist Editorial Board itself admits this when it states: "The need for such a statement was first advanced by Tim Wohlforth in the fall of 1961 with the advice of Gerry Healy in Britain. Geoffrey White authored the first draft; comrades Shane Mage and Cliff Slaughter contributed sections and criticisms on Marxist method and theory; Wohlforth furnished general editorial expansion, and several others made lesser contributions."<sup>12</sup> Truly, it was an expression of our tendency as part of an international tendency, the products of collaboration with our co-thinkers, and not just a statement of an American group.

Point ten of the concluding "Where We Stand" section of the document stated:

*"Finally, we regard the SWP with the YSA, in the political sense, as the American section of our world party. In our party are to be found the most principled and developed Marxists in our country and the embodiment of our 30 year battle for Leninism and Trotskyism. In presenting our views to the party on these critical issues we are acting in the most fundamental interests of the party and world revolutionary movement. This document, taken with the IC International Resolution, expressed the essentials of the political outlook to which our party must return."<sup>13</sup>*

This point makes clear that our orientation was to struggle within the SWP to return the SWP to a revolutionary course, not to simply reject it as already centrist and beyond our reach politically. At the same time the document reflects the international character of our struggle. We make it clear we are not only fighting for the principles put forward in the document "In Defense of a Revolutionary Perspective" but for the International Resolution of the IC.

This perspective was not simply based on characterizing the current positions of the SWP or even its political movement. As the polemics of our international tendency made absolutely clear at the time, we considered the current positions of the SWP to be centrist and revisionist and its movement to be back into the petty bourgeois revisionist Pabloite camp under pressure of alien class forces. But we saw the SWP in its historic evolution and within the context of the development of the Fourth International as a whole.

Thus we recognized the central role the SWP had played in the construction of the Fourth International and that its degeneration was therefore the central problem facing the reconstruction of the Fourth International in the new period. Therefore we were in no hurry to come to a definitive conclusion on the nature of the SWP, seeing this as being resolved in the course of the political struggle itself. The longer the struggle, the more drawn out the discussion, the better. What was at stake was the very future of the Fourth International and what was in dispute was all the theoretical capital accumulated since the *Communist Manifesto* of 1848.

## DIFFICULTY

The Spartacist Editorial Board has some difficulty explaining the contradiction between point 10 of "Where We Stand" and the position of the "Rightward Moving Centrist" party put forward only a few short months later by Robertson. In fact, strange as it may seem, they seek to blame the change in line precisely on the International Committee comrades who resisted and opposed this change. They wrote:

*"Yet the co-thinkers of the RT in Britain, the Socialist Labour League, felt obliged in July 1962 to attack the SWP in a major document significantly entitled 'Trotskyism Betrayed—The SWP Accepts the Political Method of Pabloite Revisionism.' In September of the same year IC representatives at an international meeting officially stated that 'they did not politically represent the SWP.' Since the IC which thus repudiated its earlier ties with the SWP was then*

*equivalent to the world party, the relation of the SWP Majority to the RT in the US was rendered moot. Thus within the American tendency arose a necessary political discussion to examine the nature of the SWP and clarify the relation of the SWP and clarify the relation of the RT to the SWP Majority."*

This is completely absurd. The Spartacist Editorial Board seeks, as Robertson did at the time, to confuse the sharpest political fight against the revisionism of the SWP with the political conclusion that the fight was over, the basic cadres of the SWP could not be won back to Trotskyism and thus a split must take place internationally as well as internally.

It even goes so far as to assert that the IC was repudiating "its earlier ties with the SWP." It does so even though it was precisely in this period that the SLL took the initiative and proposed parity discussions even with the Pabloites directly in order to facilitate the process of clarification within the IC. What this statement does is to obscure the real movement of the SWP itself to break off any serious discussion within the IC and to split from the IC in order to carry through its unification with the Pabloites. It was the SWP which repudiated its ties with the SWP. It was the British and French sections which carried forward the struggle of 1953 while it was the SWP which was turning its back on this struggle. Thus Robertson's rationalizations for his actions in 1962 act to obscure the real character of revisionism rather than to reveal it. This, as we shall see, has been the classic role of the Robertson group ever since.

A sharp struggle broke out inside the minority tendency over the summer and fall of 1962, producing an extremely intense factional situation. From almost the beginning, Robertson, reflecting the defeatist moods of the young comrades in the tendency, gained a majority for his faction in the New York tendency and in the Bay Area tendency as well. The minority was very much isolated within the SWP and its social composition worked against it, contributing to subjective moods desiring to simply withdraw from the struggle and split from the SWP.

A representative of the minority, Comrade Phillips, went over to Europe for consultations on the internal situation as well as on perspectives in general. In England a meeting was held, attended by representatives of both the British and French sections, which drew up a basic statement of policy for the functioning of the International Committee tendency internationally. In essence the IC supported the position taken in the "Where We Stand" statement. Point 10 of this

statement declared that we were still struggling for the SWP and not writing it off as centrist.

The IC proposed that all those who wished to be part of the International Committee tendency must sign this statement and that those who signed it would constitute the tendency. What it proposed was that the comrades in the United States who differed in their evaluation and thus in their tactical line for work within the SWP subordinate themselves to the position of the International Committee as a whole—go along with a decision based on the many years of experience of these comrades. It was also proposed that an international tendency discussion bulletin be published and it was made clear that the comrades in the United States with tactical differences could and should continue a discussion of these differences but within the international tendency as a whole.<sup>25</sup>

If this step was not taken then the tactical approach toward work within the SWP of the minority, claiming to be in solidarity with the IC internationally, would be constantly undermining the political struggle of the SLL and French comrades. The stakes were too high to permit this. There had to be a willingness to subordinate tactical differences to the overall political struggle and to the judgment of the majority leadership of the international tendency as a whole.

## HYSTERIA

The reaction of Robertson was to wage an hysterical campaign aimed at justifying a split from the International Committee. In the course of this campaign everything was done to obscure the real nature of the situation—to pose the question completely falsely and thus to justify a split from the international. For instance the November 4th statement of the "NYC Tendency Majority," signed by Robertson and four others (only one of whom is presently in Spartacist) stated:

*"It is to the enormous credit of the NYC comrades that they stood fast and refused to bow to a device literally borrowed from the arsenal of bureaucratic-centralism which facilitated the downfall of the Communist International in the Nineteen Twenties...What is completely and entirely intolerable and unacceptable is the method of intervention by the British leadership and their demand for a recantation of views on the SWP by us. Independent of the incorrectness of the British opinion about the revolutionary nature of the SWP and the petty bourgeois nature of ourselves, their laying down the law without a completed discussion and vote by all of us is dead wrong. We*

*have stated clearly that should we lose in such a discussion we would loyally abide by the decision. Wohlforth can't even abide by the process of democratic discussion and has instead inveigled overseas comrades into an ultimatic intervention. What we will not do is repudiate our political convictions—i.e. we will not capitulate. (The acceptance of this course, even as a 'tactic,' means the end of comrades as revolutionaries, since afterwards one can never raise or act on one's real (?) views without being denounced and disciplined as a deceiver.)"*<sup>22</sup>

It is absolutely clear that Robertson and his supporters were neither asked to recant their views nor were they denied the right to fight for their views. It was a question of whether the discussion would be one organized on an international level and who would make the decision as to the tactical line of the tendency while the discussion persisted. The IC proposed that the American tendency neither recant nor repudiate but subordinate its tactical views to the international tendency as a whole. At the same time it opened up a discussion within the international tendency. It proposed in the very statement Robertson was screaming about that:

*"All discussion and disagreement within the tendency is part of the discussion within the international tendency. Patience will have to be exercised so that while time is allowed for such differences to be adequately discussed internationally, the political aims and functioning of the tendency remain unimpaired. For this purpose, there will be facilities available for all members of the tendency to express their opinions in a special international tendency bulletin to be published by the Socialist Labour League. This bulletin will have a limited circulation amongst the leaders of the international sections who will be invited to comment and participate in the discussion inside the tendency. All written discussion must be carried out within this bulletin."*<sup>23</sup>

What Robertson rejected was precisely the international movement. No matter how much he ranted and raved about "recantations" and "bureaucratic centralism," the truth is he was asked to do no more than he did each day for the "Rightward Moving Centrist Party" of which he was a member—present a common line to opponents with the right to discuss differences within the organization or tendency.

As Gerry Healy wrote to Robertson on December 28th, 1962:

*"In your letter of December 15, you refer to the experience of the British Trotskyist movement*

*between 1943 and 1950, and you conclude: 'We have always considered that experience a highly important one, and sought to learn from it. However, the chief lesson your saw, that you 'refused under any circumstances to split no matter what the differences or to be driven out of the party,' is precisely what is not in dispute within our tendency. We have said consistently, and repeat once again, we will not split, we cannot be driven, from the SWP.' (Your emphasis.)*

*"By not accepting the proposals we presented to comrade Phillips, you, in fact, split from us. If you cannot remain in our ranks and discuss with us, especially since you claim to be closer to us politically, we fail to see how it is going to be possible for you to remain in the SWP, unless, of course, you consider yourself closer to them in matters of method."*<sup>24</sup>

# The 1963 S.W.P. Convention & Its Aftermath

Exactly where Robertson and his "Revolutionary Tendency" actually stood in relation to the SWP and the International Committee became crystal clear one year later at the June 1963 convention of the party. It was at this convention that the SWP majority organized its split from the International Committee and its unification with the Pabloite International Secretariat of Ernest Mandel. This was to be carried through on the basis of a document entitled "For Early Reunification of the World Trotskyist Movement."<sup>29</sup>

On the basis of this document the SWP called an unauthorized rump conference of its supporters within the International Committee, held simultaneously with the conference of the Pabloites, and carried through the hasty reunification. At all costs a serious discussion within the IC had to be avoided. Today, as the recent world conference of the "Unified Secretariat" revealed, the Pabloites are being forced to confront the very questions they refused to discuss in 1963.

Robertson's RT submitted to this convention a document called "Towards the Rebirth of the Fourth International."<sup>30</sup> The very first paragraph illustrates how far they had drifted from the International Committee in less than a year:

*"For the past fifteen years the movement founded by Leon Trotsky has been rent by a profound*

*theoretical, political, and organizational crisis. The surface manifestation of this crisis has been the disappearance of the Fourth International as a meaningful structure. The movement has consequently been reduced to a large number of grouplets, nominally arrayed into three tendencies: the 'International Committee,' 'International Secretariat (Pablo),' and 'International Secretariat (Posadas).'"*

In two sentences Robertson wipes out the entire continuity of struggle of Trotskyism. Just at a time when the SWP majority stated in its resolution that "while substantial differences still remain, especially over the causes of the 1954 split, the area of disagreement appears of secondary importance,"<sup>31</sup> Robertson in his own way disconnects the whole struggle of 1952-1954 from the current reunification. The critical point which both Robertson and the SWP leadership were seeking to avoid was the meaning of the original split with Pablo.

It was the position of the SLL, the French comrades and our tendency in the SWP that the 1952-1954 split with Pabloism was a necessary break with revisionism which must now become definitive. The SWP, forced into this empirical break, refused to probe the roots of Pabloism and to continue the struggle against Pabloism. Therefore they ended up by embracing Pablo's method and returning to the Pabloite fold.

We viewed Pabloism as a liquidationist tendency which repudiated in practice the **Transitional Program** upon which the Fourth International was founded. While this revisionism cut deeply into the ranks of the Fourth International, it did not succeed in liquidating the Fourth International. The Fourth International continued in the form of the International Committee. Once again in the 1961-1963 period, the liquidation of the Fourth International was posed in the turn of a section of the International Committee supporters, led by the SWP, to liquidate the IC into the Pabloite International Secretariat. It was against this liquidation that the minority tendency, from its birth, was dedicated.

All this disappears with the RT document along with the "meaningful structure" of the Fourth International. In its place we find "a large number of grouplets nominally arrayed into three tendencies..." Parties become "grouplets" after the fashion of the New Left and the Fourth International becomes "three tendencies," each we gather can just as legitimately or illegitimately claim to be the Fourth International.

Flowing from this perspective Robertson's RT cannot really oppose the SWP majority's liquidationist move:

*"'Reunification' of the Trotskyist movement on the centrist basis of Pabloism in any of its variants would be a step away, not towards, the genuine rebirth of the Fourth International. If, however, the majority of the presently existing Trotskyist groups insist on going through with 'reunification,' the revolutionary tendency of the world movement would not turn its back on these cadres. On the contrary: it would be vitally necessary to go through this experience with them."*

All the groups claiming to be Trotskyist are seen by Robertson as Trotskyist. If the majority of such groups wants to unite in a single organization then Robertson wishes to "go through the experience with them." On this basis it is hard to see how Robertson could have supported the original split in 1953. Pabloism is for Robertson a matter of taste. It would be a "step back" to unify on a Pabloite program but Robertson will willingly participate in this backward step.

So, at the 1963 SWP Convention the Robertson RT delegation abstained on the actual vote to unify with the Pabloites and it was only the Reorganized Minority Tendency, those comrades who remained with the IC, who voted against!

What a vivid contrast between the approach of Robertson to the International Committee tendency and to the revisionist Pabloites. Robertson was willing to accept the discipline of the Pabloite line by "going through the experience" with them, but would not give in on a tactical question to the IC tendency despite his purported complete political agreement programmatically with the IC tendency. Why was it that Robertson would not "go through the experience" with the IC? Could it be, as Gerry Healy had suggested a few months earlier, that Robertson was closer to the SWP majority on matters of method?

Spartacist has just published a new **Marxist Bulletin**—this one is "No. 3 (Part IV—1965)." Called "Conversations with Wohlforth," it contains the minutes of negotiations held between Spartacist and our predecessor organization, the American Committee for the Fourth International (ACFI) between June and October of 1965. The "Preface" to this, dated April 24, 1970, is useful as a current statement of Spartacist's view today of the period when both groups were in the SWP to the period of the 1966 IC Congress.

In this "Preface" Spartacist has the following to say about this critical 1963 Convention:

*"The Wohlforth tendency continued to exhibit its characteristic lack of backbone and principle at the 1963 SWP Convention. The main issue facing the SWP was Black Nationalism; their capitula-*

*tion to it was the first application of their Pabloism to the terrain of the domestic class struggle... In these negotiating sessions ACFI constantly insisted that the 'American Question'—divorced from the Black question, a separation which is artificial in any case—was the important fight. The RMT's (Reorganized Minority Tendency—our group-TW) long counter-resolution on the American Question declared that the trouble with the SWP was that it had lost contact with the American proletariat, predicted imminent economic crisis and insisted now was the time for the conquest of the masses. In their analysis they were, of course, hopelessly dis-oriented. But more importantly, what the Wohlforthites would love to overlook now (with their present oversimplified, grossly insensitive position towards Black oppression) is that in 1963 they supported Black Nationalism. Were it not for the fake superproletarianism of their British mentors, they would probably be supporting it still."*

If we seek to cut through all this gobblygook—for as in all Spartacist writings, it is like thrashing through a bamboo forest with a machete—several important points emerge:

First, Robertson still refuses to understand the significance of the 1963 Convention and therefore of the whole international struggle with Pabloism. Rather than seeing the SWP's break with the International Committee—that is with the Fourth International and the whole continuity internationally since the First International—Spartacist sees the Negro question as central. In this way Spartacist shows it still stands on the same pragmatic national grounds with Cannonism, concerned only with the "domestic terrain."

## CENTRAL

Second, contrary to what Spartacist states, our minority did not view the American question as such as the central question at the 1963 Convention. Rather we counterposed documents to be voted up and down against the positions of the SWP majority on the International question and the American question. Furthermore, our analysis in the American document was a development of the international perspectives outlined in the International Committee "World Prospects of Socialism" resolution in 1961.

Third, Spartacist's treatment of the Negro question is exemplary of their approach to all questions. According to Spartacist, our position at that time was conciliatory to Black Nationalism while today Spartacist itself supports Black caucuses in unions and denounces our class line as "grossly in-

sensitive" to Blacks and a result of the SLL's "fake super-proletarianism." It would thus appear that the present position of Spartacist is consistent with the past position of the Workers League. And so it is. In 1963 we stood closer to the SWP majority on the Negro question and today Spartacist stands closer to the SWP on the Negro question.

This is why a machete is needed to cut through the bamboo forest. The differences between Spartacist and the Workers League—especially historically—are not a matter of this position on this question and that position on that question or some assortment or summation of positions and questions. We must get at the underlying and central questions. Once these are understood the individual bamboo trees fall into an order.

The Workers League began with a confused position on the question of Black Nationalism but has emerged today as the only political tendency which consistently and ruthlessly fights every and all manifestations of Black Nationalism—and precisely for this reason has attracted a section of Black and Puerto Rican workers and students to its banner—while Spartacist, despite its sharp attacks on Black Nationalism in 1963, today embraces its most dangerous form in the proposal to organize Black workers separate from white workers within unions, thus breaking up the unity of the class right at the center of the class struggle.

This diametrically opposed evolution can be explained by the fact that the minority tendency which became the Workers League took the principled and correct stand on the fundamental question of the international movement and its perspectives and never for one moment backtracked from this stand. In time, and through participation in the international movement, this international strategy found a deeper expression in the Workers League's understanding of the Black question as it did in its understanding of many other questions.

For Spartacist, then and now, the international question was just one of many that it has held "positions" on. As an organization it therefore had and has no central strategy, no principled political history and development. So today it is incapable of writing two sentences about its differences with our tendency historically or currently that get to the heart of anything.

Fourth, as far as the question of our predicting some "imminent economic crisis," Spartacist even after the May-June events in France and the GE and Postal strikes here—not to mention the current upsurge—considers "hopelessly disoriented." We will return to this question a little later on so we can see how it was developed at the 1966 IC Congress, how it

relates to the current outlook of Spartacist, and at the same time answer the charges on this question in *Spartacist West*.

## EXPULSIONS

In the "Preface" as well as throughout the negotiation minutes contained in "Conversations with Wohlforth" we have the following standard Spartacist accusation: "In 1963-4 the Wohlforthites were instrumental in deliberately bringing about the expulsion of the RT from the SWP." And later on: "We remained in the SWP—until the RMT framed up and then informed on our comrades..."

Let us take a serious look at this question of the expulsion of the Robertson group from the SWP. In the immediate period prior to the July 1963 convention and during that convention our tendency was at the center of the attack because the SWP was preparing its break from the International Committee forces with which it had collaborated since 1953.

While there were some small groups within the IC that went along with the SWP, it should be kept in mind that the very founders of the IC and its central forces from the beginning were the SLL, the French Lambert group and the SWP. It was these three organizations which had stood together against Pablo in 1953 and it was this formation which represented the continuity of the Fourth International.

The break with the International Committee was both a result of and a qualitative further step into American nationalism—an outlook which lay at the base of the pragmatic method and liquidationist political positions which the SWP now held in common with the United Secretariat in Europe. As long as Trotsky lived, these pragmatic and national tendencies were kept in check and the SWP was an important part of an international movement. Much of the political direction of the SWP took place with the direct intervention of Trotsky who in that period embodied in himself to such a great extent the internationalism and experience of the world working class since the writing of the *Communist Manifesto* in 1848.

## CANNON

With the death of Trotsky, and particularly with the writing by Cannon of the *American Theses* in 1946, the SWP drifted away theoretically from any kind of international strategy while maintaining a formally correct relation with the Fourth International. Cannon's *American Theses* saw an American revolution developing independently of an international strategy and actually in spite of the stabilization of capitalism

in Europe in that period. The Theses was not only ridiculously wrong—being issued right on the eve of the boom in America and the dark McCarthy period—but more importantly it expressed the very essence of “Cannonism” as a tendency distinct from Trotskyism: that is, the pragmatic construction of the SWP independently of the development of the Fourth International on the basis of an international strategy rooted in the international character of capital.<sup>35</sup>

When in January 1961 the Socialist Labour League issued its letter to the SWP demanding a serious discussion of what it detected to be a real drift on the part of the SWP back into the Pabliste camp, one thing became very clear to the leadership of the SWP. If it maintained its relations with the International Committee, it would be on a different level from before. This time a serious international movement would be built and its discussions and its construction would take precedence over the national party of the SWP.

The split from the IC in 1963 was therefore very much a new qualitative step in the break of the SWP from internationalism itself and the political reunification with the United Secretariat was the cover for this break. We can see this especially in the writings of Tom Kerry and Farrell Dobbs of the time, more so than in Hansen’s writings, which were more diplomatic, always with an eye to a proper cover for an international readership.

An example of this is Tom Kerry’s article “Preston-Healy Prepare Their Split!” written on the eve of the 1963 convention and before the consummation of the SWP’s own split from the IC.<sup>36</sup> Gerry Healy was at the time General Secretary of the International Committee though in that capacity he used the name G. Preston. While the SWP could not be a section of the IC because of the Voorhis Act, it considered itself in political solidarity with the IC and thus functioned under its political guidance.

What was infuriating Kerry was that Healy in his capacity as head of the IC was precisely seeking to give the SWP some guidance. The guidance he was giving was of a rather minimal—one might even say quite reasonable—character as what he proposed was that the SWP not expel the opposition groups. “We shall in no circumstances stand idly by,” Kerry quotes Healy, “and allow any kind of organizational measures to be taken against comrades Wohlforth, Phillips or any other tendencies including Shane Mage or Robertson whose desire is to seriously participate in the international discussion...Your national conference cannot terminate this discussion because it will continue to be organized from the Parity Committee.”<sup>37</sup>

Tom Kerry did not like this at all:

*“There you have it—all wrapped up neat and tidy. Our convention, Healy informs us, cannot terminate the discussion.”*

And later:

*“I don’t know why we bother about holding a convention at all. Think of all the time, energy and money that could be saved by calling off our convention and allotting the funds to Healy for paper, postage and printing, to keep us informed from day to day as to what we can and cannot do.”*

And finally:

*“A word of friendly advice to the Healyites in the SWP. You will be making the worst mistake of your lives if you count on the ‘protection’ of Preston-Healy to challenge or defy the decisions of our national convention.”<sup>38</sup>*

What Tom Kerry is saying is clear enough to see. The cover of the reunification is ripped off. He could care less about that. He does not counterpose the decisions of this new reunified body to those of the IC from which he is breaking. No, it is the SWP’s national convention which is sacrosanct; it and it alone is the highest body, with nothing but nothing in the world higher. It and it alone will decide whether or not a discussion continues on international questions and whether or not a tendency is expelled because of its support of an international position held in common with other sections of the international movement.

## DOBBS

This same kind of nationalist outlook is expressed by Farrell Dobbs in a speech to the December 1963 National Plenum of the SWP which suspended the leaders of the Robertson group.

*“It’s disloyal to connive behind the back of the Party with Healy or anybody else. I believe this cadre has more than had its fill of self-proclaimed world leaders who purport to set themselves up as the be-all and end-all of revolutionary wisdom, undertake to make rulings as to who is a centrist and who’s a revolutionist, and then fish around for stooges to connive with them behind our backs.”<sup>39</sup>*

Once again the party alone is set up in opposition to anything outside it including and especially the international movement. As in the case of Kerry, Dobbs is addressing not just the IC—with which at this point the split had been consummated—but warning its new “friends” in the United Secretariat. Unity is all well and good internationally as long as the national convention and national leadership remains

the highest body and nobody but nobody in Europe deigns to give it orders or pass political judgment upon it.

These statements of Dobbs and Kerry reveal the unprincipled and unwritten agreement upon which the reunification took place. There is some question as to whether even this agreement can keep this formation together, now that the deepest political differences have come to the surface. (See "Documents from the World Congress of the Revisionist 'Unified Secretariat of the Fourth International' " in the Winter 1969-1970 issue of **Fourth International**.)

Such was the actual political climate in which the 1963 convention took place. Within this framework the Spartacist's role of breaking from the international tendency of 1962 and its willingness to go along with reunification in 1963 took on a nationalist strike-breaking character and as such was of the greatest help to the SWP majority. Kerry's and Dobbs' attacks on the international are almost word for word the same as those used by Robertson the preceding year in the internal international discussion and that Robertson would use again in 1966.

No wonder in the period leading up to the 1963 convention and at the 1963 convention, the strategy of the SWP leadership was to amalgamate the two tendencies in order to confuse the principled struggle of the International Committee with the antics of the Robertson group. At the same time the main fire was on Healy and on our tendency for its principled support to the International Committee.

In June of 1963 our tendency issued a document entitled "Party and Class." We sought to counter this campaign to amalgamate our struggle with that of Robertson and thus obscure the central issues in dispute internationally. We explained from our own point of view the reasons for the split in 1962 in the tendency but at the same time made it clear we did not feel the Robertson group was in any sense in violation of the discipline of the SWP and would defend the same if it were so attacked. We stated:

*"A number of individuals who refused to sign our reorganization statement did leave the party in the interim—four comrades who signed the Robertson statement on Cuba and two comrades who refused to sign either statement. But the bulk of the Robertson tendency seemed to pull back from a split course. This to us was a welcome sign and it opened up the possibility that these comrades would reconsider their whole approach towards the party and the class. We did our best in the New York local to keep factional pressure off them and*

*were very much opposed to the factional attacks the majority leadership levelled against them...However, while political collaboration is out of the question, we do believe these comrades seriously seek to remain in the party and have shown willingness to carry out their responsibilities towards the party. Therefore, we continue to oppose any factional pressure or organizational attacks on this group and feel that they should be answered politically."*

At the actual convention the central heat was on our tendency. In fact Joseph Hansen, in his International Report devoted to a denunciation of the IC forces and our tendency, takes time out to compliment Robertson: "The Robertson-Mage tendency, for instance, have taken what I consider to be a favorable turn. They have decided that Cuba must be characterized as a 'deformed workers state.'"<sup>11</sup>

## DEBATE

During the convention a debate took place inside the leadership over action to be taken against our tendency. Weiss, who represented the most Pabloite wing of the leadership, had favored our expulsion as early as 1961 but by this time emerged as the greatest defender of the Robertson tendency. Cannon, we understand, was pushing for the immediate expulsion of our tendency on the grounds of our being agents of the IC.

The difficulty was that while the basic framework for the reunification had already been worked out, it had not yet been ratified by the smaller IC sections who were supporting the SWP. The SWP leadership was afraid that expulsions at that time on the basis of relations with the SLL would not sit well with these forces and would reveal the factional character of the SWP's whole "unity" operation. At the same time it was not easy for the SWP to break with the IC comrades it had collaborated with so long. It amounted to an irrevocable break with its whole past back to 1928. Almost instinctively the old cadre of the SWP felt compelled into this break but at the same time held back from its formal completion. As with such things, it took time. As far as our tendency was concerned it took, in fact, another year. Even then it was the coalition government in Ceylon which brought it to a head.

At this convention all the leadership could get away with was an undemocratic punitive action against the two members of our tendency on the National Committee of the SWP: Wohlforth and Phillips. We were summarily removed from this body on grounds of "disloyalty."

In August of 1963 the Political Committee passed a motion setting up a Control Commission for the purpose of investigating the Robertson group. It sought to distort political charges made by our tendency into organizational charges and thus shift the onus of the pending expulsion to our tendency. Robertson, of course, did all in his power as well to make it appear as if our tendency carried out the expulsion.

The motion was a double-edged sword aimed at us as well:

*"In face of Robertson's refusal to cooperate with the efforts of the National Secretary to clear up this question, Comrade Dobbs sent a formal request dated July 10 to Tim Wohlforth, requesting copies of the 'Robertson-Ireland document' and the 'Harper statement.' Apparently solidarizing himself with Robertson in this matter, Wohlforth rejected the request, alleging that the documents that had been cited and quoted from in Discussion Bulletin Vol. 24, No. 27, were 'private political material.'*

*"In view of this obstructionist course being followed by both Robertson and Wohlforth in a matter of vital concern to the welfare and discipline of the party, the Political Committee now refers this question to the Control Commission, requesting that it conduct an investigation into possible violations of the statutes of the party, especially involving Robertson, Ireland and Harper."*

In the period before the Plenum which was held on the Robertson suspensions, our tendency issued a statement which said in part:

*"In the current suspension of members of a minority tendency, namely Comrades Robertson, Mage, White, Ireland, Harper, the Political Committee has not only suspended comrades for their ideas, written for internal tendency discussion some time ago, but has also suspended some who may or may not share these ideas."*

The statement concluded with a call for the lifting of the suspensions. In his report to the December 1963 Plenum Dobbs took full note of our role:

*"A parenthetic question arises: Where does the Wohlforth-Phillips group stand today? In the split with Robertson, Mage and White, they declared their loyalty to the party. But they waited several months, right up to the eve of the convention, before informing the party of the Robertson-Mage-White split perspective. Wohlforth refused my request for copies of the Robertson-Ireland and Harper documents. And now the Wohlforth-*

*Phillips group has denounced the Political Committee for its action in suspending the leaders of the Robertson-Mage-White faction because of their disloyalty to the party. Clearly, the Wohlforth-Phillips group still has some things to explain to the party."*

So much for Spartacist's accusations that we "framed up" and "informed" on Robertson. But there is another aspect of this whole expulsion process which is even more politically revealing. It is the role of Myra Tanner Weiss, official lawyer for the Robertson group.

It must first be noted that Myra Tanner Weiss together with her husband stood in the right wing of the party. As the basic statement which the Robertson faction refused to sign in 1962 stated, "the main political fight of the tendency must be directed against the right wing elements in the party, the Weiss group and the Swabeck tendency." The Weisses had been the most enthusiastic Pabloites on the Political Committee. It was in fact in this period that Murry Weiss came to the conclusion that Cochran had been right in 1952 in his liquidationist course. Following this perspective after the December Plenum the Weisses dropped out of political activity and in a short time, all those in the party associated with them—with the exception of Halstead, who openly went over to Dobbs—dropped out of the party altogether.

It was this liquidationist element that Robertson used as his chief advocate against the suspensions. Clearly Weiss was looking for any weapon to use against the party leadership and Robertson was more than happy to help her in this respect. Once again we find a pattern devoid of principle; once again we find the "practical" relations Robertson works out with Pabloism—for all his orthodox attacks on Pabloism.

Not surprisingly, Weiss defended Robertson precisely by attacking the IC and solidarizing herself with Robertson's break with the IC:

*"Let me point out comrades, that they are not in an international caucus with Healy. This is not so. If that is really what is motivating you I can prove that it's not so. And I will take just a few minutes to prove it.*

*"You wondered about this loyalty oath that was brought in by Wohlforth over a year ago. You've got to appraise it. Why wouldn't Robertson or Mage sign it? Because they want to split with the party? Because they're disloyal? Wohlforth is right? But that's not so. That resolution presented to us by Wohlforth was written by Comrade Healy. You did not know that perhaps, but it was—you*

*bide your time comrades, I'm not on the witness stand—I didn't know until very recently, but I know now. It was written by Comrade Healy. But it wasn't given to us as Comrade Healy wrote it. There were certain deletions and it was those sections that were deleted from Healy's draft against which Mage and Robertson voted, thereby being expelled from the attempt to organize an international faction."*<sup>45</sup>

She then goes on to quote from a section of the document not before made public inside the SWP precisely because it dealt with the internal organization of the international tendency. It was not made public because it was possible Dobbs might seek to twist it and use it to expel our tendency—particularly as we have noted earlier Dobbs saw the discipline of the SWP as overriding that of the international movement. It was the section proposing an international internal tendency discussion bulletin.

"So Robertson and Mage said this was bureaucratic," she concluded. "You're going to expel those who couldn't stomach, in their first encounter with Healy, his bureaucratic, sectarian methods of organization."<sup>46</sup> Weiss then went on to reveal that the source of her information was Mage. Right after the document was originally issued she asked Mage about it and "he didn't tell me the whole story and I didn't ask to hear it, but I was thoroughly convinced that any collaboration between Healy and Robertson was out of the question."<sup>47</sup> The actual document she quoted from was given to her "more recently."

What this reveals is the bloc between Weiss and Robertson was based on more than opposition to the undemocratic expulsion of the Robertson group. They stood together in common agreement in their hostility to internationalism and democratic centralism and above all, their deep hatred of the International Committee. It was on this political basis that Weiss sought to get support for Robertson from the Dobbs leadership. At the same time it is also revealed that the Robertson group furnished internal material to Weiss and authorized her to use it in their defense knowing full well this material could be used to expel our group. In other words Robertson did exactly what he falsely accused us of doing—handing over to the majority documentary material which the majority could use for disciplinary action.

But it did not all end here. Following the ratification of the suspension by the December, 1963 Plenum of the SWP, the Robertson group issued an appeal to the United Secretariat. In this appeal Spartacist once again pointed out the position it

had taken in urging the IC to follow the SWP into the reunification. Thus as late as 1964, it was in favor of liquidating the Fourth International into the revisionists—right on the eve of the entry of the LSSP into the bourgeois coalition government in Ceylon.<sup>48</sup>

But just as important is the sentence which follows the one accusing us of being "instrumental" in their expulsion: "Shortly thereafter the RMT (having split internally, the unstable bloc with Phillips having blown up) engineered its own expulsion from the SWP."<sup>49</sup> So on the one hand Spartacist places the blame on us for its own expulsion and on the other hand Spartacist places the blame on us for our own expulsion. It could even appear that for Spartacist the main enemy and culprit then as now is the Workers League and not the Pabloite revisionists!

What were the actual grounds upon which our tendency was expelled? In the summer of 1964 the LSSP, at that time an affiliate of the United Secretariat along with the SWP, entered into a bourgeois coalition government. Thus a group which called itself Trotskyist followed directly the path of Stalinism, joining directly with the bourgeoisie in the government of a bourgeois state. It was the culmination of the whole degeneration of Pabloism begun in 1952. The SWP was up to its ears implicated in the entire situation. The great betrayal of the working class in Ceylon stood as a warning that the logic of Pabloite revisionism everywhere was open collaboration with the bourgeoisie.

Under such circumstances it was absolutely necessary as a matter of principle for our minority to demand that the SWP be called to order and take a sharp look at itself and its evolution in the light of Ceylon. As our tendency had been undemocratically removed from the Political Committee and National Committee and the 1963 Convention, we had to resort to the only means open to us. We circulated to the party membership and branches an appeal to the Political Committee to open up a discussion on the question of Ceylon. We did not go beyond the party. We did not even raise the question orally in the branches. All we did was circulate to party members an appeal to the Political Committee to open a discussion. For this we were forthwith suspended from party membership and not even allowed to appeal our suspensions at a branch meeting. The SWP could not tolerate a discussion on this question.

What actually "engineered" our expulsion was our determination to take a stand on this fundamental international question of principle. For Spartacist, Ceylon was but one of

many questions, besides which internationalism and principles are unknown quantities. So to them our action seemed artificial, "engineered," and they obviously sympathized with the SWP's response to this "engineering."

The "Preface" from which we have been quoting is an introduction to a series of minutes of negotiations between the two tendencies held from June to October in 1965. The negotiations were actually the result of a series of exchanges of letters between the two groups beginning as early as July of 1964. They were followed by the intervention of the International Committee and the beginning of new negotiations which prepared the way for the participation of both groups in the 1966 International Congress of the IC. Thus during the entire period from the expulsion of our tendency to the 1966 Congress some form of communication and negotiation was going on between the groups.

This is, in fact, the central importance of these particular minutes—not the detailed contents of same. This the Spartacist cannot recognize. Discussions of one sort or another took place between the two tendencies in that period precisely because the political differences between the two groups were not clear. Thus the current "Preface" concludes with a section claiming that even in that period Spartacist was to the "left" of our group stating: "For even when our political similarities were most striking, differences between ACFI and Spartacist tended to follow a pattern: Spartacist showed political seriousness, principle and spine, while ACFI caved in at any opportunity."<sup>50</sup> But on July 17, 1964 Robertson wrote:

*"As you know, in our view a principled political basis for unity has continuously existed since the split in November 1962, providing only that all comrades would function in a disciplined way on the basis of democratic-centralism. It is difficult to make an appraisal of our political differences in view of their marginal character."<sup>51</sup>*

The inescapable conclusion which must be drawn from the entire process of exchanges of that period—covering some two years—as well as from the admission of Robertson at the time is that the political differences between Spartacist and the ACFI at that time had to be clarified, either resulting in a new unification or going forward to deeper and irreparable split. It was not possible to clarify everything within the confines of the SWP. This clarification would be of critical importance for the future development of the revolutionary party in the United States. Thus the attention we still give these questions years after Spartacist disappeared as a serious force in American socialist politics.

It is also just as clear that the negotiating sessions, like the exchanges of letters which preceded them, were unable to clarify anything and ended up in collapsing into acrimony. It is precisely this acrimonious character of the minutes which motivates Robertson to republish them at this time. He has even published them out of sequence, as to the best of our knowledge, neither part two nor part three of Marxist Bulletin No. Three has appeared.

This the "Preface" also acknowledges when it states: "Relations between the two groups deteriorated visibly throughout the last few negotiating sessions, culminating in a frank showdown in the 8th meeting over the 1962 split and the wretched record of ACFI."<sup>52</sup> We might note that anyone who thought unification could take place on the basis of common agreement on the "wretched record of ACFI" was simply expressing the completely blind and factional bind into which these sessions had fallen.

"At this point," the authors of the "Preface" continue, "Gerry Healy instructed ACFI to proceed with unity forthwith. In this sense, the negotiations are unreal: they actually had little to do with bringing about the Northern (Montreal) joint unity conference which followed them."<sup>53</sup> In the first place, Gerry Healy instructed no one, but proposed to both the ACFI and Spartacist that the discussions take place on a different international level. Once this is understood then we see that the unity negotiations were anything but unreal and did have much to do with the joint unity conference and the IC Congress which followed.

The negotiations proved the impossibility of resolving the differences between our tendency and Spartacist on the narrow national level. As long as the discussion remained on this level it could not help but bog down in isolated position versus isolated position, this scandal versus that scandal, factional and personal acrimony, etc. It was the failure of these minutes to clarify anything that made it so clear that it was necessary to break the controversy out of its national bounds and go forward into the international movement. It is the failure of these minutes to clarify anything that makes them so attractive to Robertson six years later.

# 1966 Conference of the International Committee

The 1966 Conference of the International Committee became the turning point in the development of both the Workers League and Spartacist. The break between the two organizations was from that point on definitive and by the same token the commitment of the Workers League to the construction of the Fourth International unswerving.

This conference was the test of the political nature of the two organizations; it sorted out the essential from the secondary and in the process made clear even the secondary political points. Questions which could not be resolved on the national level became crystal clear on the international level. For these reasons Spartacist to this day cannot look squarely at this conference and present an explanation of it beyond the level of scandal mongering. In this respect it is in no sense distinct from the Socialist Workers Party itself.

The recent issue of *Spartacist West*, which we have been discussing, states that we have:

*"Charged Spartacist with rejecting internationalism, and what was the proof? The leading Spartacist delegate to the 1966 conference of the International Committee (Healy's group) in England would not yield to Healy's demand that he admit our supposed petty-bourgeois American chauvinism by apologizing for being unable to at-*

*tend a session because of extreme fatigue! (See Spartacist No. 6.)"*

We have already pointed out that this charge did not come out of nowhere and that the relations between the Robertson group and the international movement dating back to 1961 include a split from the international IC tendency in 1962, and a refusal to vote against reunification with the Pabloites in 1963. Now with this as background we can turn to the 1966 period.

It was not only political and tactical questions in dispute between the ACFI (American Committee for the Fourth International, predecessor organization to the Workers League); the relationship of Spartacist to the Fourth International was even more confused. From the time of Robertson's split with the IC in 1962, through his expulsion from the SWP and the first issues of *Spartacist*, this group claimed to be in political solidarity with the International Committee. Yet in 1963 it had refused to vote against the SWP's reunification with the Pabloites internationally and in 1964 was appealing to the United Secretariat of the Pabloites on the basis that it urged the SLL and other sections of the IC to go along with this reunification.

As late as May 18, 1965 Harry Turner wrote in the name of the Spartacist Resident Editorial Board a letter to the United Secretariat requesting attendance at the upcoming Pabloite World Congress in order to "appeal the 'Resolution on Robertson group' of the United Secretariat of April 1964..."<sup>55</sup> Thus as late as May 1965 Spartacist was still keeping a foot in the Pabloite door.

But it had its foot in another door as well. Following a trip by members of Spartacist to Cuba, the Spartacist group established close fraternal relations with the Posadas Pabloite tendency in the 1964-1965 period. Posadas' group, which held "leftist" positions on some questions, was actually an extreme Pabloite splitoff which adhered to Pablo's 1950 "war-revolution" thesis which supplanted the class struggle with international war between imperialism and the workers' states. This led Pablo to the conclusion that the Trotskyists should liquidate themselves into the Stalinist parties which in turn would be revolutionized by the impending war with the capitalist nations.

While Pablo dropped the formula when the impending world war did not impend, Posadas persisted with it, taking it to the point where he called for preventive nuclear war by the Stalinists against the urban centers of the imperialist powers. Such a position not only substituted military action for the action of the working class but posed the very physical extinc-

tion of the working class in the advanced capitalist countries.

For instance *Spartacist* Number Three, issued in January-February 1964, contains an article entitled "Freedom for Cuban Trotskyists!" which defends members of Posadas' organization in Cuba against Castro's attacks and persecution.<sup>54</sup> But the article does more than this—it is clearly a statement of political solidarity with the Posadasites who are referred to over and over again as "Trotskyists" and as "that wing of the Fourth International led by Juan Posadas."<sup>55</sup> At no point did the article in any way differentiate itself politically from this extreme revisionist tendency.

The very next issue of *Spartacist*, May-June 1965, issued around the same time *Spartacist* appealed to the United Secretariat, included a letter from Theo Melville of the Posadas group in England. This letter thanks *Spartacist* "warmly" for publicizing the Cuban Posadasite case, attacks the Socialist Labour League for "their complete loss of Bolshevik perspectives" and concludes: "You have rendered a service to Trotskyism in the USA in the very citadel of imperialism."<sup>56</sup> This letter makes clear not only the close relations between the Posadas people and *Spartacist* but that hostility to the IC was one axis of agreement with Posadas.

This relationship with Posadas continued after the 1966 Conference and the definitive break with the IC. Another letter from the British Posadasites appeared in the November-December 1966 issue of *Spartacist* thanking them once again for their defense of various Posadasites arrested—this time Adolpho Lilly and others in Mexico—and concluded: "We thank you for your efforts, and send to the 'Spartacist' comrades the warm fraternal greetings of the British section of the IV International."<sup>57</sup>

This relation existed until the January-February 1967 issue of *Spartacist* which featured an article entitled "Posadas in the MR-13" which refers to Posadas' organization as a "remnant of the Pabloite model" and states: "His position on the party is a centrist one: Posadas' practice, in Guatemala, for example, was openly liquidationist of the Trotskyist program." The article concludes: "Posadas' cadres, if they do not cleanse themselves of Posadas' opportunism and unprincipled revisionism, will play no part in the building of a Latin American proletarian vanguard..."<sup>58</sup>

This was *Spartacist's* first mention of any differences with Posadas. It may be of interest to note that this attack on Posadas followed a lengthy public denunciation of *Spartacist* by Posadas printed in all the organs of his tendency.

Thus *Spartacist* in 1965 maintained it was in political

solidarity with the International Committee and its political differences with the IC were of a minor character. At the same time it still favored a position that the IC forces should have gone along with reunification with the Pabloites and itself appealed its exclusion from the Pabloite international. Meanwhile it carried on the closest fraternal relations with the ultra-Pabloite Posadas tendency. While one can and must question whether *Spartacist* held an internationalist outlook and perspective, there was certainly no question as to its activity on the international scale.

## MONTREAL CONFERENCE

In October of 1965 a conference was held in Montreal attended by a representative of the International Committee and by delegations from the ACFI and *Spartacist* organizations. The purpose of this conference was to clear up once and for all the relationship between *Spartacist* and the Fourth International. As Gerry Healy wrote later:

*"Following his expulsion from the SWP, Robertson kept up the formal pretense of general political agreement with the International Committee, but this by itself was not enough.*

*"The main question involving the political reasons behind Robertson's split from the International Committee in 1962 still remained unsettled. A further attempt had to be made to see if the political experience of his group had produced a change in this respect for the better or whether or not the gap had widened."*

At Montreal the two groups agreed to seek unification and to attend the 1966 Conference of the IC. The two organizations "accepted the principles embodied in the decisions of the first four Congresses of the Communist International, the resolutions and documents agreed to by the 1938 Founding Conference of the Fourth International and the International resolution on perspectives adopted by the International Committee of the Fourth International Conference April, 1966."<sup>59</sup>

This represented a very extensive and a very fundamental level of common agreement. The two organizations were to push aside factional questions and to collaborate with each other in a fraternal spirit while seeking to arrive at a common American document within the framework of the above international agreement. The agreement on paper was solid and principled, and whether or not this was a real agreement in practice could only be revealed through the common struggle to develop an American perspectives document on this basis and to participate in the International Conference.

The two organizations were pushed towards serious unity negotiations and the International Congress by objective political considerations quite outside the individual motivations of the participants. While there were no doubt forces within Spartacist resisting any kind of unification—and these forces were to predominate through Robertson—there were other forces heartened by the prospect of unity and being part of the International Committee.

Most important was the objective political consideration that the political relationship of Spartacist to the International Committee had not yet been resolved and this in turn also meant that the political nature of the American Committee for the Fourth International as well had not been fully sorted out.

During a period of generally nonfactional fraternal relations a number of discussions were held to produce a common American perspectives document. Robertson volunteered to come in with the draft. On March 20, 1966 at a joint membership meeting of the New York branches, virtually on the eve of the actual conference, Robertson came in with a document entitled "Draft Theses on Building the Revolutionary Movement in the US." The document contained an overline stating "rough outline"—which was probably the understatement of the decade.

The document consisted of a series of quotations and brief notations. For instance, the entire section of the document on trade union work for the Spartacist League went as follows:

"9. *The SL trade union work:*

"—*transitional demands: specifically adapted forms of '30 for 40' labor party*

"—*considerations in trade union fraction building*

"—*intervention in strikes*

"—*recruitment from Negro struggle a short cut to working class.*"<sup>63</sup>

But even more important, those sections which had any detailed content in them reflected very much a Pabloite outlook. The first paragraph sees the aim of the fused organization to build the revolutionary party. The second paragraph reiterates from the joint unity agreement:

"*The SL based on the principles embodied in the decisions of the first four Congresses of the Communist International, the resolutions and documents agreed to by the 1938 Founding Conference of the Fourth International and the International resolution on perspectives adopted by the International Committee of the Fourth International Conference April, 1966.*"<sup>64</sup>

The third paragraph actually consists of a quote from James P. Cannon in 1954! The quote refers to the "defenders of the orthodox doctrine" and the "uncorrupted revolutionists."<sup>65</sup> But James P. Cannon himself, the greatest defender of orthodox doctrine and the most uncorrupted of revolutionists was to lead the SWP back into the camp of revisionism only a few short years later. Rather than assessing how Cannon, basing himself on narrow orthodoxy rather than on an understanding of dialectics and an international perspective, evolved in this fashion, the document simply quotes Cannon to illustrate what our tasks are today.

By the fourth paragraph we have already travelled a great distance from the principles of the Communist International, the founding conference of the Fourth International and the perspectives of the International Committee. The Cannon quote was but the road to this paragraph which begins not from the international perspectives but from pessimism about the United States:

"*The SL effort to develop and apply in the US the theoretical understanding won by the world Trotskyist movement and its historic revolutionary predecessors starts from a necessary low level. SL weighed down by combination of decades of international setbacks and disorientation of proletarian vanguard together with particularly hostile American milieu. This recognition a precondition for greater mastery.*"<sup>66</sup>

The real perspectives of this document thus proceed from international setbacks and disorientation to a particularly hostile American milieu. It is with this disoriented outlook—so similar to that of the Pabloites, who saw hope only in the "third world"—that the tasks of the SL were to flow. Next comes two quotes from Antonio Gramsci which make up paragraph five. This quote states in part:

"*In reality one can foresee only the struggle and not its concrete episodes; these must be the result of opposing forces in continuous movement, never reducible to fixed quantities, because in them quantity is always becoming quality.*"<sup>67</sup>

In the context of this document the quote takes on an idealist character, saying in effect that one cannot predict and therefore one cannot base the tactics of the party on a strategy derived from an understanding of developments in the material base of society.

Flowing from this, paragraph six states:

"*The SL tactical aim in the next period toward building the revolutionary party is the emergence of a large propaganda group capable of agitational*

*intervention in every social struggle in the US.*"<sup>66</sup>

Thus the strategy of building the revolutionary party, which is the first paragraph of the document, becomes transformed into the tactic of building a "large propaganda group" (we will see what happens to even this concept in the future evolution of Spartacist)—with a quote from Cannon, some pessimism on the US and a quote from Gramsci in between.

Next comes paragraph seven which states that "The SL tasks projected in the context of general economic and social conditions which are significantly less stable than in the decade of the 1950s."<sup>68</sup> Rather than seeing a sharp crisis of a fundamental character, Robertson sees only less stability in which to build his propaganda group.

Finally comes paragraph eight, the last in the section of "General Tasks":

*"Hence the SL must act consciously to intervene alertly as the shifting opportunities permit, rather than press on with newly inapplicable tactical formulae."*<sup>70</sup>

Here we find the meaning of the Gramsci quote—or more accurately, the use to which Robertson puts it. As everything is in flux one just stands alert watching the opportunities shift, building a propaganda group in hostile milieu in which the economy is only a bit less stable than it was in the boom period of the 1950s.

What we have here actually is a document which in no way represents a qualitative break with Pabloism. As with the SWP, lip service is given to historical continuity with the program of the early Communist International and the Fourth International and to an international perspective. But the tactics flow not from this continuity and international perspectives, but rather from American conditions. Further, these American conditions are seen in an impressionistic way, reflecting all the pessimism of the petty bourgeois radical. This leads to the perspective of building a propaganda group which will drift along and in a pragmatic fashion intervene in whatever happens to be going on.

The document was rejected by the ACFI, not without certain internal strains. At the same time the ACFI was unable in the short time before the conference to come up with its own document. The writing of such a document was assigned to Lynn Marcus, whose evolution we will discuss more fully later. His draft reflected Pabloism in another form. His orientation was a completely middle class one towards "radicals" whom he saw as distinct from the working class and his objec-

tive, like Robertson, was to build a propaganda group. Under such circumstances the ACFI could not put forward any document officially as its own.

What this reflected was that Pabloism was expressed not only within the Spartacist group but had penetrated into sections of the ACFI. To the extent that American "conditions" dominated both groups, their petty bourgeois composition would pull them back toward the very revisionism they had fought to begin with. The conclusion which we drew from this situation was not some sort of arrogant rejection of unification because of the Pabloite political positions of Spartacist. Rather we oriented all the more toward the April IC Conference with an understanding that the American movement as a whole had much to learn from the international movement, and the hope that together in a unified organization we could make greater progress in the development of an American perspectives document which was an expression of the IC's international perspectives, not in contradiction to it.

## UNITY

In this light the Coordinating Committee of the ACFI passed the following motion on March 20, 1966:

"1. We are confident unity can and will be brought about on schedule.

"2. In the opinion of the Coordinating Committee, the Spartacist draft outline is not a basis for a sound fusion.

"3. Therefore we will draft an alternative draft to present, as stipulated at the Montreal meeting, in April.

"4. We should not interpret this as anything but a natural outgrowth of the Montreal meeting. These possible problems were foreseen in Montreal and provisions made for them; in the final analysis the unification will be the stronger for proceeding in a principled way."

Such was the state of affairs at the time of the April IC Conference. It was not a good situation, but after several years of separate existence of the two groups and a certain history of these groups it was certainly a situation which was understandable. The lesson of the failure of the two groups to arrive at mutually agreeable American perspectives was that the central question which must be arrived at if unification could take place was the international question. If there was agreement to proceed at all times from this perspective and as a loyal part of the international movement willing to learn from the experience and history of this movement, then an

American perspectives document could be worked out in the period after the Conference.

With this as background we can now turn to what Spartacist characterizes as "undoubtedly one of the most hilarious organizational atrocities ever,"<sup>72</sup> which expresses the seriousness with which they today view their break from the Fourth International. Following the report on the International Perspectives resolution—the resolution upon which Spartacist originally agreed to unity and attendance at the IC meeting—by Cliff Slaughter, Secretary of the IC, Robertson made a political presentation. The presentation was in fact a political attack on all the fundamental positions of the International Committee, of the International Resolution and of Slaughter's report. In this sense it represented a summation of everything upon which Spartacist stood in opposition to in the IC.

This report of Robertson did not come out of nowhere. It is clear from our brief sketch of the political development of the Robertson group since 1962 that every point in this report had an antecedent in Robertson's own history and political positions. The point is that it stood in contradiction to that other strand of Robertson's tendency from its origins—its claim of political agreement and solidarity with the International Committee. It was thus a political declaration of war against the IC rather than a serious political effort to come to a common understanding with the IC. Let us now look at this statement.

First Robertson commented on the question of Pabloism. He stated:

*"We take issue with the notion that the present crisis of capitalism is so sharp and deep that Trotskyist revisionism is needed to tame the workers, in a way comparable to the degeneration of the Second and Third Internationals. Such an erroneous estimation would have at its point of departure an enormous overestimation of our present significance, and would accordingly be disorienting."<sup>73</sup>*

Here we have all of Robertson's American pessimism and petty bourgeois radical complacency. He sees no sharp and deep crisis. He sees revisionism playing no class role as a cover for Stalinism in a period when a new generation is coming into the struggle, a generation largely hostile to Stalinism. Above all he does not wish us to overestimate our present significance. We must look upon ourselves as insignificant radical propagandists conducting essentially an idealist battle with other propagandists in which the stakes are not really

very great as there is no sharp crisis. What becomes revealed here is that the essence of Spartacism, to the extent it exists as a separate tendency from and in opposition to the Fourth International, is unseriousness.

Then Robertson proceeds to the point which led him to abstain on reunification in 1963:

*"Nevertheless, there are now four organized international currents all claiming to be Trotskyist, and spoken of as 'Trotskyist' in some conventional sense. This state of affairs must be resolved through splits and fusions."<sup>74</sup>*

He supplements this with the statement that the Cuban Posadasites "were in the main excellent comrades struggling with valor under difficult conditions." Soon thereafter Posadas himself had to denounce these "excellent comrades" for repudiating any international affiliations as a condition to be released from jail. Soon after that Posadas was to condemn Spartacist itself and Spartacist was to write the sharpest of denunciations of the "Pabloite" Posadas tendency.

What this reveals is that Robertson did not come to the IC Conference with the conception that the International Committee represented the continuity of the Fourth International politically and organizationally, while the other three international groupings represented factions of the Pabloite revisionists in the process of disintegration. Rather he saw four groups, each as "Trotskyist in some conventional sense" as the other. His purpose at the IC Congress was therefore to carry through "splits and fusions" much as he would if he were admitted to the United Secretariat Congress or the Posadasite Congress. Robertson began with Spartacist, its narrow prejudices and positions, and on that basis approached all the international tendencies much as a fisherman among the lakes of Northern Minnesota.

## CUBA

Robertson then launched into a lengthy exposition of his theory on the class nature of Cuba, expressing his agreement with the SWP that Cuba is a workers' state. His only difference with them was his claim that this workers' state was degenerated—a position to which in time most of the revisionists also came. In order to maintain this view Robertson came up with the extreme revisionist theory of "the possibility of a social transformation led by the petty bourgeoisie,"<sup>75</sup> in which he went even beyond the Pabloites to openly proclaim that the petty bourgeoisie were capable of creating workers' states—albeit of a deformed character. So much for the historic role of the working class in the socialist

revolution!

Then he proceeds to the American question and begins by stating:

*"The principal aspect of our task which may be obscure to foreign comrades is the unique and critically and immediately important Negro question. In the US the qualitatively heavier burden within the class is borne by the Black workers. In quiescent times they tend to be divided from the white workers as in the lower levels of class struggle such as are now prevalent. Therefore the Black youth in America are the only counterparts today to the sort of militant white working class youth found in the British Young Socialists."*

Robertson sees the United States as in a "quiescent" period, notes the strong racial division within the working class in such a period, and then proposes a tactical course based on this assessment and these divisions. Proceeding in this way he ends up right where the SWP ended up—with an orientation which saw the white working class as quiescent and at least for now hopeless, and which thus sought to adapt to the Black movement as a separate movement. He even notes that these "peculiar" American conditions may be "obscure to foreign comrades." He, Robertson, above all understands America and the foreigner may have difficulty fathoming this peculiar American reality with its racial divisions, its quiescent white workers and its hostile environment.

Robertson then concludes his speech with a reference to his draft document which proposes the perspective of building a propaganda group.

This speech was a declaration of political war against the International Committee. It was a summation of every error Spartacist in the past put forward as a political alternative to the perspective of the IC—a perspective Robertson had declared his agreement with. But if there was any question as to the meaning of this political statement, it was to find expression in Robertson's actions following the speech.

The events which followed this speech are summarized in the "Statement of the International Committee on the Robertson Group (USA)":

*"In the conference after the secretary's report on International Perspectives based on the resolution 'Rebuilding the Fourth International,' Robertson spoke at length on the third day of discussion (Wednesday, April 6). Despite Robertson's claim to agree with the resolution before the conference his contribution showed very clear disagreement with the main political line of the report and resolu-*

*tion. After making this contribution Robertson failed to appear for the subsequent session of discussion on the grounds that he was tired due to his having worked overnight on a draft document on American Perspectives for the conference.*

*"The conference expressed the unanimous opinion that Robertson must immediately return to the proceedings. Not only were his reasons for his absence quite unacceptable, but he had made no approach to the chairman of the conference before leaving.*

*"Robertson saying that he was 'not available,' refused to return to the conference for the whole of the session in question in which a number of comrades made serious criticisms of points made in Robertson's contribution.*

*"On Robertson's return for the Wednesday evening session, the Secretary began his reply to the discussion by saying that Robertson's absence from the exhaustive discussion on his own contribution was utterly irresponsible and that Robertson's request for permission to be absent had been rejected by the conference as inadmissible in a communist organization. Here Robertson interjected on what he called 'a point of personal privilege.' In the first place, he explained, he had not requested permission to be absent and did not know of any rule requiring him to request such permission. He was present at the conference not as an individual but as part of his delegation; his delegation was fully empowered to note the discussion and participate in it during his absence. It was pointed out to Robertson that his responsibilities to the international movement through its highest body, the conference, were clearly involved, and he was asked to apologize to the conference. This he refused to do.*

*"A motion was then put demanding an apology from Robertson and stating that if he refused then he must leave the conference. In the course of discussion on this motion Robertson again stated that he did not know the rules of the conference. The original motion was modified to say that its application would take place only at the end of the general discussion and the vote on the resolution and report of the Secretary of the International Committee, thus giving Robertson an additional opportunity to reconsider his position. This motion was carried, and Robertson stayed to the end of the discussion, reply and vote on the report and resolution of the International Committee. Robertson*

and the Spartacist delegation voted for the amended resolution but abstained on the report.

*"In accordance with its earlier resolution, the conference then asked for Robertson's statement on his absence the previous day. He again refused to apologize. Thus, the resolution applied only to Robertson's breaking communist discipline in refusing to accept the decisions of the International Conference and not to the rest of his delegation. The chairman asked Robertson to leave. He then left followed by his delegation."*

It is clear that at no point was Robertson asked to admit his "supposed petty bourgeois American chauvinism." What did happen was that in the opinion of the International Conference, Robertson's refusal to apologize for his conduct of blatant disregard of the discipline and wishes of the Conference was a reflection of this petty bourgeois and nationalist outlook. If, on the other hand he had made a serious attempt to subordinate himself to the international movement by apologizing for his actions it would have been a step in the direction of placing the development of the international movement, the construction of the international party, above his own prestige and wishes. That the Conference went to great lengths to give him a number of opportunities to make this step is abundantly clear from the record.

## EXPRESSION

Robertson's walking out of the Conference sessions was an expression of the political positions in his report. It made crystal clear not only the character of these positions but their purpose. By this action Robertson made clear that he was counterposing the Spartacist organization to the International Committee. Robertson was not expelled from the Conference for his political views and if he had taken a step toward the international movement through an apology, it would have meant that it was quite possible that the political difference, in time and with common experience and discussion, would be resolved as part of an international movement.

Once again the Spartacist leadership whipped up an hysterical campaign against the International Committee which went even further than the campaign of 1962, with cries of "authoritarianism," "bureaucratic centralism" and the like. The current statement from Spartacist West gives the flavor of it:

*"The Workers League conception of internationalism is a miniscule parody of the old Moscow-oriented Communist parties—only in this*

*case it is a tiny band of pseudo-Trotskyists spouting British chauvinism instead of Russian."*

In this we find an open appeal to every petty bourgeois swine who begins with national prejudices. The Fourth International is equated with Stalinism and even Stalinism is seen as a matter of "Russian chauvinism" rather than as an expression of a bureaucracy much in the way the anti-Soviet enemies of the early Comintern posed it.

But this was only a beginning. Driven by its hatred of the International Committee, Spartacist formed a working relationship with the revisionist SWP against the International Committee. In so doing Spartacist only made all the clearer the significance of its break with the International Committee. And, as we will see, this working relationship was no mere episodic matter.

Harry Turner wrote to Gerry Healy in 1966:

*"You indicate that Spartacist 'may for a while exist on the basis of renewed hostile activity toward the International Committee.' This concept is also completely erroneous. We have never initiated hostile activity toward the I.C. and do not contemplate it now. We intend to maintain a correct attitude toward the I.C. indicating that we share with them the same spectrum of political views. We consider ourselves to be a part of international revolutionary Marxism. We will defend ourselves from public attack, but it is not our desire to advertise the unprincipled attacks on Cde. Robertson and Spartacist by the SLL leadership. We will, of course, reserve the right to disagree publicly with the SLL when we do so in principle."*

We read these comments now with a bit of skepticism from page 24 of the pamphlet Healy 'Reconstructs' the Fourth International, featuring a preface by Joseph Hansen and published in June, 1966 by the Socialist Workers Party. If this is not "advertising" we would like to know what is.

This is what Spartacist West writes today of this business:

*"To clinch their argument, the Workers' League charges that we handed over to the SWP documents on the 1966 conference which were then published in a pamphlet by the SWP. When challenged by a Spartacist at the WL conference to prove this charge, Wohlforth, head of the WL, could only mutter, 'We will,' but they still mention no facts in their paper (in fact, the documents were taken by the SWP from a mutual contact). We have distributed the pamphlet because it contains mostly our documents and nothing by the SWP ex-*

*cept a relatively accurate introduction by Hansen. Our position on the SWP's revisionism is quite clear in Spartacist, for those who can read."*

Your position, we might add, on the SWP's revisionism is very clear in *Spartacist West*, for those who can read. Every accusation we have made on the collaboration of Spartacist with the SWP against the International Committee is here openly admitted in that one quote. It seems, if we are to believe this statement, that the documents related to the split with the IC were not given directly to the SWP but through a mutual contact. Why, may we ask, did Spartacist give these documents to a person known to them to be in contact with the SWP and thus in no sense trustworthy to keep the documents secret from the SWP? Even if we dismiss the suspicion that they were given to this contact precisely because he was in contact with the SWP and could be counted on to hand them over, we are left with the inescapable conclusion that Spartacist gave this anti-IC material to an SWP contact because Spartacist was convinced it would make a favorable impression on this contact. In other words, Spartacist was seeking to win someone away from the SWP by making clear its own hatred for the International Committee.

For the record we state that Spartacist by its own admission handed over the documents of the controversy to a contact of the SWP who in turn handed them over to the SWP. Spartacist must take responsibility for the transmission of these documents into Hansen's hands. They came from Spartacist and no other source.

Next Spartacist admits that once the SWP published this material, it then proceeded on its own to distribute the pamphlet with Hansen's introduction. This introduction is characterized as "relatively accurate." Even now in 1970, Spartacist refuses to criticize politically Hansen's introduction. Even now in 1970 the SWP continues to peddle this document. So we must conclude that even now in 1970 the common bloc between Spartacist and the revisionists is maintained.

Now this is truly an anomalous situation. The SWP goes to the expense of printing a pamphlet, Hansen puts in the time to write a "relatively accurate" introduction, and the SWP then distributes this pamphlet for four years. Why? As an educational service to the inquiring public? Because it begins at all times from the perspective of aiding Spartacist in building its organization? Because they are just a bunch of good guys up at 873 Broadway?

Hansen's purpose is clearly to use Robertson to discredit the International Committee so as to build up the Pabloite United

Secretariat and seal off the ranks of the Pabloites from the political criticisms of the IC. Hansen not only refrains in his introduction from any serious criticism of Robertson but actually works himself up into a sympathetic sweat over Robertson's health at the Conference. Then he states his own conclusion quite clearly:

*"Last December, while Healy was getting out the publicity for his coming circus, the Fourth International held the Second Congress since Reunification (the eighth since the movement was founded by Leon Trotsky in 1938). There was no attempt at describing it as more than it was, or pulling any bluffs.*

*"Differences of opinion on some points were freely expressed at the congress. This was expected and, in fact, was welcomed as an indication of the democracy and free atmosphere reigning in the international life of the movement.*

*"It was a serious gathering of delegates and observers from well-established sections and parties in a number of countries. Their main objective was to consolidate the reunification, bring the main political analysis of the movement up to date, and open a new stage of expansion for the world Trotskyist movement."*

Is this a "relatively accurate" description of the nature and role of the Pabloite international? Or was Spartacist so shaken up over Hansen's sympathy for Robertson's health, so twisted in their bitterness toward the International Committee, that this defense of Pabloism was dismissed as unimportant, a minor matter, and passed almost unnoticed?

Not only does Hansen defend the United Secretariat as the Fourth International but he labels the "Second Congress since Reunification" as the "eighth since the movement was founded by Leon Trotsky in 1938." This one "relatively accurate" statement wipes right out of the history of the Fourth International, the entire experience of the International Committee from 1953 to 1963, recognizing the Pabloite faction congresses in that period as in retrospect legitimate congresses of the movement Trotsky founded in 1938.

Ah, but all this matters little in the eyes of *Spartacist West*. The main thing is that all the dirt get out against Healy and that Robertson's noble battle for honor, his unbending head, be printed up in a nice edition and be distributed as widely as possible!

The relationship between Spartacist and the SWP over the "Healy Reconstructs" pamphlet was to be only the start. This collaboration was soon to take on a new, vicious form in the so-

called "Tate Affair."

Contrary to the slanders of Hansen and Robertson, the 1966 Conference of the International Committee represented a fundamental step forward in the construction of the Fourth International. This and this alone explains the great effort to which the Pabloites resorted in slandering the Conference. What Robertson and Hansen held up as an example of the weakness of the Conference—the political break with Spartacist and the French Voix Ouvriere Group—was actually the great strength of the Conference. It was the other side of the affirmation of the International Committee as the continuity of the Fourth International. It was precisely this which threatened the Pabloites as well as the Spartacist group.

It was at the IC Congress that a youth commission was set up which laid plans for the collaboration of the British Young Socialists and the French Revoltes group in the upcoming Liege antiwar demonstration. A call for this demonstration had been issued by the Belgian JGS youth organization under the leadership of the Pabloite Ernest Mandel. The British and French youth decided to respond to the call and prepared to bring serious forces to Liege, Belgium for the demonstration in the fall of 1966. This work represented the beginning of the international youth collaboration which was to lead to the International Youth Assembly held in the summer of 1967 and this in turn was a step toward the International Youth Conference scheduled for later this year.

The British Young Socialists brought 500 youth to Liege. Along with 400 youth brought by the French Revoltes, these two contingents alone made up almost half of the entire march. Liege proved concretely—right in the heart of Europe—that the International Committee, far from being "ultra-left sectarians" had been able to assemble youth forces on a mass scale.

More than that was expressed at Liege. The IC contingents were politically cohesive, marching in a disciplined manner with Trotskyist banners and chanting "Long Live the Fourth International!" in French. The British contingent was made up almost entirely of young workers who had never before been out of the country and who had been transported a great distance through a large campaign to participate in the demonstration. Liege marked the re-emergence of Trotskyism among European youth on a mass scale. As such it threw the Pabloites into the deepest crisis and panic.

The demonstration took place on the 10th anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution and banners carried by both the French and British youth commemorated this event, linking

the struggle against Stalinism with the international struggle for the socialist revolution. Youth of the Belgian Communist Party announced they would refuse to march in the demonstration if the Hungarian banners were carried. The Pabloite leaders of the JGS acceded to this blackmail and demanded that the British youth not carry their Hungarian banner. At one point they actually threatened to call in the police against the British Trotskyists and in defense of the Stalinists. Only by the determination of the British and a public appeal over a loudspeaker was this attempt of the Pabloites thwarted.

The IC Congress and the Liege demonstration stand as a political background to the Tate Affair. The affair was actually a very small incident which was turned into a major campaign by the Pabloites to divert their membership and others from the growth of the IC and its political program. On November 17th, just after Liege, the SLL held a public meeting in Caxton Hall, London to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution. The Canadian Pabloite Ernest Tate, at that time the SWP's personal representative in England, was as usual in front of the meeting, hawking—you guessed it—"Healy Reconstructs the Fourth International."

Here is an account of exactly what happened in front of Caxton Hall issued by the International Committee. It has been attested to by a number of independent witnesses. Accusations by Tate to the contrary were withdrawn by various British papers on threat of legal action attesting to the fact that these allegations had no basis in fact.

*"Tate's account of what actually happened outside the meeting is completely false. He was one of a large number of people selling the literature of their various tendencies. Comrade Healy entered the meeting together with Comrade M. Banda and Comrade P. Lambert. On his way to see the caretaker to make final arrangements for the meeting, Comrade Healy asked the steward at the door to ensure that the entrance was kept clear for the coachloads of people disembarking outside the hall. The steward requested the sellers of literature to move, and they all complied with this, except for Tate. Refusing to move, he insisted the stewards would have to call the police before he would move. It was at this point that the exchange of blows took place. Comrade Healy was not present when the scuffle began. Emerging from the caretaker's office, he saw the incident and immediately took steps to ensure that it stopped.*

*Tate and the SWP leaders are concocting outright lies when they allege that the incident took place under the direction of Comrade Healy. They lie when they say that physical violence was used to prevent him from selling literature critical of the SLL and its leadership.*"<sup>42</sup>

Following this incident Tate ran a whole international campaign claiming hooligans at Healy's direction beat him up to prevent him from selling literature which he had been freely selling many times before at SLL gatherings. He openly appealed to all kinds of hostile anti-Trotskyist middle class circles like Peace News, the Socialist Leader, and the Tribune.

Tate, for instance, wrote:

*"Neither a fascist Mosley nor an ultra-left Gerry Healy who imagines himself to be a Trotskyist, should be allowed to curtail our democratic rights."*<sup>43</sup>

Along the same lines, but even more explicit, the Posadasite **Red Flag** wrote:

*"Imperialism is very weak, it is incapable of mobilizing big fascist currents but it will use what can be used and the SLL outfit is ideal with its gangster methods and fascist mentality which prevails within it."*<sup>44</sup>

Anarchist Laurens Otter adds his voice in a letter to Freedom stating:

*"Not merely is the thuggery of the SLL consistent with Trotsky's actions when in power, but Comrade Tate belongs to the American SWP which for years countenanced Healy's disciplinary measures against dissidents. Fryer, Cadogan, Pennington, to name but four..."*<sup>45</sup>

And so we go the complete circle and the anti-Trotskyist character of the campaign around Tate begins to lash home at even its initiators in the SWP!

On November 17, 1966 Farrell Dobbs of the SWP wrote James Robertson of Spartacist as follows:

*"In view of the declaration in the November-December issue of Spartacist that your organization remains in 'essential political agreement' with the organizations headed by Thomas Gerard Healy and Tim Wohlforth, the main spokesman in the United States for the SLL, your own stand on the issue of the employment of physical violence against members of other workers organizations is placed in question.*

*"We trust that you will clarify your stand—and its relation to your expression of political soli-*

*arity with Healy—in an adequate way and as rapidly as possible."*<sup>46</sup>

Robertson responded as rapidly as the infrequent publication schedule of Spartacist allowed and the January-February, 1967 issue printed the screaming headline "Oust Healy!" Robertson definitely clarified his stand and in particular as far as political solidarity with Healy was concerned. Spartacist simply printed in its entirety the Tate letter with its comparison of Healy with Fascist Mosley. It repeated every slander of the Pabloites, taking every accusation at face value and adding its own venom.

Spartacist concluded:

*"In the event that the grip of Healy's clique on the Socialist Labour League is too strong, or Healy's leading collaborators on the International Committee too cowardly, to intervene directly to oust Healy, we think it appropriate to force a workers' inquiry to expose this fraud who disorients and corrupts the Trotskyist movement by posing as a revolutionary leader."*<sup>47</sup>

No doubt Robertson would nominate for membership on such an "inquiry" body, the editors of **Red Flag**, the anarchist Otter, the editors of **Peace News** and **Tribune**, and Farrell Dobbs!

## LOGIC

But the matter does not end here. We turn to the next issue of Spartacist (May-June, 1967) and find the article "Healy at Liege and Peking." Referring once again to "Healy's bureaucratic Cominternist organizational maneuvers," it states:

*"If the politics of a group such as the SLL remain formally 'correct' while the organizational practices of its leading clique increasingly degenerate into Stalinist gangsterism, this contradiction must inevitably set up a tension urgently in need of resolution: either the rotting leadership must be thrown out or the political life of the organization will be increasingly contaminated."*<sup>48</sup>

If we seek patiently to wade through the logic of this statement then what Spartacist seems to be saying is that the SLL has gone over to Stalinism in its organizational behavior and that this will in time find expression in its political life. The proof of this political contamination is in the very next sentence:

*"The sectarian provocation committed at Liege in October 1966 by the Healy-Banda proteges, the British Young Socialists (YS), indicated that the*

*second alternative was being realized."*

This "sectarian" provocation is described:

*"The YS appeared at the anti-imperialist demonstration carrying a banner in support of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution."*

Such is the warped reasoning of Spartacist! The organizational Stalinism of the SLL finds its political reflection in the raising of a banner defending the Hungarian Revolution! This is then, in chorus with the Pabloites, denounced as "sectarian." The grounds given are that it offended the Stalinist youth present and thus it would "drive them away" rather than win them over. As if one could break Stalinists from Stalinism by hiding one's Trotskyist convictions and banner!

As with the SWP, Spartacist could not explain Liege. As with the SWP, Spartacist began with its fear and hatred of the new development of the Fourth International. It is this mutual hostility to the forces of Trotskyism which drew the SWP and Spartacist together in 1966 and 1967 and it is this hostility which holds them together today on major issues.

The quick evolution of Spartacist following the 1966 Congress revealed the hostile nature of this group and the impossibility of building a revolutionary current separate from the Fourth International. As Trotsky commented many a time, there is no middle ground between Stalinism and Trotskyism. Those who reject the Fourth International end up serving in one fashion or another revisionism and revisionism serves as an all important prop for Stalinism. Says Spartacist West:

*"Our position on the SWP's revisionism is quite clear in Spartacist, for those who can read."*

We can read! We can read!

## The Graduates: Mage & White

We now turn to the graduates of the Spartacist School. Following the 1966 IC Conference the Spartacist experienced a series of desertions and splits which reduced the group to a shell of its former self and more important removed virtually every leading member who had played any role in the previous struggles.

A look at just a few of these figures, the actual role they played while in Spartacist—particularly in relation to the IC—and where they ended up, will throw more light onto the nature and character of Spartacist and Robertson. We will begin with Shane Mage.

Shane Mage was one of the three initiators of the opposition within the SWP at the beginning of 1961. He sided with Robertson in the 1962 split in the minority and from then on to the 1966 Conference was one of the central leaders of the Spartacist group, a member of its leading body, the Resident Editorial Board, and a spokesman for the organization. After four years in the leadership of Spartacist he was to leave—to embrace LSD, psychedelia and today, Zen Buddhism.

In fact Mage was very directly involved in the issue which started the discussion which led to the split in the tendency. In the spring of 1962 Shane Mage's wife Judy became involved in the initial organizing campaign which led to the formation

of the Social Service Employees Union in the Department of Welfare in New York City. In the course of this work Judy Mage came into conflict with the leadership of the SWP. It became clear that either she would have to abandon or curtail this work or be in danger of expulsion from the party for violation of discipline. She resigned from the party.

It was because of this situation that this author wrote the "Proposed Statement on Orientation." Against Judy Mage's action which endangered the whole work of the international tendency, this stated:

*"We recognize no circumstances whatsoever which would justify a member of our tendency, or any member of the party for that matter, in resigning from the party. We predict that there will be many, many situations in the coming period in which comrades will have to see important mass work temporarily injured in order to remain a part of the party. The party to us is more important than any of these individual mass activities—or all of them together. Our task is to politically utilize these grave errors of the party leadership in order to educate the proletarian cadres of the party politically as to the nature of the political process now going on in the party."*

The position taken by Shane Mage and Robertson was to defend Judy Mage in her act of resigning from the party and to insist that she still be a member of our tendency despite the fact that she was not a member of the party. Needless to say, this raised certain questions as far as the discipline of the SWP but, as we have discussed earlier, even more questions as far as an understanding of the importance of the political struggle against revisionism in the Trotskyist movement internationally. Mage added his defense to Robertson's.

*"Presence in the same movement as the Pabloite revisionists and even, in certain cases, participation in a national party with a solidly entrenched revisionist majority, is a necessary tactic for the revolutionary tendency. Like any tactic it is entirely subordinate to revolutionary strategy."*

*"The essential strategy of Marxism today is the formation of the revolutionary vanguard party of the working class through continual promotion of and participation in the class struggle on the basis of the perpetual development, dissemination, and implementation of the program of Trotskyism."*

*"Strategic imperatives can give way to tactical considerations only on the basis of concrete and compelling argument. Where the discipline of a non-revolutionary organization conflicts with the*

*obligation of a revolutionary to his class and to the Marxist program there can be no presumption in favor of acceptance of that discipline."*

*"The revolutionary tendency consists of all those individuals participating in the class struggle on the basis of the Trotskyist program, irrespective of whether some party with a revisionist majority is willing to permit them to be 'party members.'"*

This same Mage was to have the gall to write to Gerry Healy in November:

*"You have undoubtedly been told, as we were told to our face, that the majority of the tendency in the U.S. is preparing to split from the SWP. I can give you the most categorical assurance that this is a lie...When all of us have stated that we have no perspective outside the SWP we meant every word."*

But what about your wife Judy and your defense of her split from the SWP? At issue here was clearly a retreat from the political struggle against Pabloism on the grounds that all that counted was to fight as a "Trotskyist" in the working class. Judy Mage was to carry out the logic of this rationale provided by Shane and Robertson and break completely from the Robertson group and become a labor bureaucrat. At one point in her career as president of the SSEU, this "Trotskyist" who chose the "class" had to be escorted out of a union meeting by reporters from the Daily News so that she would not be lynched by an enraged membership!

It must be remembered that it was Shane Mage who provided the theoretical cover for Judy Mage's desertion of the movement and that it was Robertson who organized a faction on the basis of this theoretical cover, a faction which in the fall split from the International Committee tendency.

We next meet Shane Mage in November of 1962 writing to Gerry Healy "in shock and disbelief." In this letter he stated that his differences with the proposals of the IC to the tendency "are essentially only two":

*"1) I disagree with the proposal to centralize discussion among members of the tendency in the U.S. through a bulletin published in England. This proposal could only tend to obstruct the healthy political and organizational development of the tendency. Moreover as far as I can see it would be a direct violation of SWP party discipline and certainly would be a disloyal act toward the party!"*

*"2) I believe that the entire SWP leadership, by its political methodology, outlook, and practice, is fundamentally Pabloite. Like all centrist tendencies it is heterogeneous, and splits within it can be*

*counted on to provide us with concrete chances to intervene. But I would give weight to differences among individuals within this leadership only in the context of their basic political identity.*"<sup>96</sup>

Here we have the most arrogant of nationalist outlooks! Mage objects to a discussion centralized through England because it would "obstruct the healthy political and organizational development of the tendency." His arguments about violating party discipline and a "disloyal act against the party" shows how close he stood on such matters to the prejudices of the SWP leadership. The SWP was in that period politically part of the International Committee and the arrangement proposed by the British was neither undisciplined nor disloyal if one understood the conception of a world party!

## LIQUIDATIONIST

The second point is a criticism of that section of the statement which singled out Weiss and Swabeck as the greatest liquidationist dangers inside the SWP. Mage did not want to make this distinction, for his own orientation was toward Weiss! The meaning of this was to come a short while later.

We next run into Mage in Myra Tanner Weiss' previously quoted speech in which she mentions Mage as her source for information on the nature of the 1966 tendency split. She reveals that Mage, shortly after writing Gerry Healy "in shock and disbelief," was telling Myra Tanner Weiss, leader of the extreme right wing of the party, all about the split. It is further revealed that in 1963 Mage handed over to Weiss to use publicly in the party precisely those sections of the IC statement which in November of 1962 he saw as in "direct violation of SWP party discipline."

It was in the 1965-1966 period of preparation of the International Committee Conference that Mage quickly evolved as a liquidationist. By this time he was becoming less and less active in the life of Spartacist, devoting most of his efforts to his academic career. He did find a little spare time to make two interventions of a political character.

They first took the form of an article printed in the November-December 1965 issue of Spartacist entitled "Trotsky and the Fate of the Russian Revolution." Written in the form of a review of Isaac Deutscher's trilogy on Trotsky—some three years after the last volume appeared—it was in actuality a vehicle for Mage's own re-assessment of Trotsky and Trotskyism. Criticizing Deutscher for being "fatalistic," Mage poses the question this way:

*"The victory of Stalinism that actually took place can appear as inevitable if and only if we are*

*convinced that no reasonable course of action present as a real possibility to Trotsky but rejected by him would have resulted in a preferable alternative.*"<sup>97</sup>

Deutscher sees the rise of Stalinism as inevitable and irreversible and Trotsky's struggle to be correct, though hopeless. Mage accepts this way of posing the question and thus proposes to break through Deutscher's fatalism by discovering that Trotsky was incorrect! What both Mage and Deutscher leave out is the actual dynamic of the international class struggle and its interrelation with the conscious struggle of the party. The outcome of this interplay is not predetermined.

The historian who after the events informs us that what happened happened and thus had to happen reduces the theory of history to the empirical level. What both Deutscher and Mage cannot comprehend is that even though Trotsky was correct and lost, he could have won, and this he or anyone else at the time could only assess through the struggle to win.

Mage pins the fate of great historical events on certain tactical and factional mistakes he asserts Trotsky made. These include making a compromise with Stalin at the 12th Party Congress in 1923, going duck hunting in 1924, and his repudiation under discipline of Eastman's publication of Lenin's Testament. "The picture adds up," Mage comments, "not to a series of errors but to a ruinous policy."<sup>98</sup> So assesses Mage the 1923-1926 period.

The 1928-1929 period of the united opposition bloc with Zinoviev seems to meet with his approval. Here Mage attacks Trotsky for refusing to bloc with Bukharin, the right wing opposition, against Stalin. After all, he notes, "political designations 'left,' 'right' and 'center,' which should be neutral and have no emotional weighting at all (at least within the revolutionary spectrum) somehow became metaphysical essences showing the true nature of each faction."<sup>99</sup>

What we have here is a basic challenge not only to Trotsky's tactics but to the political and theoretical character of Trotskyism itself. In commenting on the 1923-1926 period Mage noted that Trotsky was "totally unwilling to take any action which might risk organizational exclusion from the party."<sup>99</sup> Mage, as we have noted in the conduct of him and his wife in 1962, is the kind of brave soul who is always willing to take risks of organizational exclusion from a party! He thus projected onto Trotsky the methods of Robertson and himself in the SWP fight, rather than learning from Trotsky's fight within the Bolshevik party.

Trotsky's strategy in the 1923-1926 period proceeded from his understanding of the critical importance of the issues at stake in the struggle: the central role of the Communist Party in the international movement and the fate of the world's first workers' state. Therefore he showed a willingness on a number of occasions to sacrifice factional advantage and even make certain political compromises in order to remain inside the Bolshevik party for as long as possible to carry out the fight.

Trotsky also proceeded from a dialectical understanding of the relation of the internal struggle of the Bolshevik party to the class struggle internationally. Thus he sought to bide time in the hopes that a favorable turn in the class struggle would materially strengthen the hand of the Left Opposition so that the many millions of the working class internationally could be brought to play against the Stalinist bureaucracy which rooted itself in the pessimism and defeat of revolutions and the isolation of a backward country.

But all this is of no concern for Mage. He actually goes so far as to blame the rise of Stalinism on the "mistaken" tactics of Trotsky! Trotsky in 1940 summed up the approach of the Left Opposition toward the Communist Party and Communist International even after the expulsions and exile of 1928:

*"In the Third International we persisted with all our power to remain a tendency or a faction. They persecuted us, they deprived us of all the means of legal expression, they invented the worst calumnies, in the USSR they arrested and shot our comrades—in spite of all we didn't wish to separate ourselves from the workers. We considered ourselves as a faction to the very last possibility. And all that—in spite of the corrupt totalitarian bureaucracy of the Third International."*

The question of a bloc with Bukharin reflects the same anti-Marxist method. Trotsky used the terms "left," "center" and "right" in a scientific, not metaphysical, way. He saw Stalin in the center resting on the right-wing Bukharin group, which in turn openly rested on the capitalist kulak farmers within Russia and on international capital externally. He correctly saw the main danger in that period coming from this right-wing tendency, openly encouraged by Stalin. Furthermore Trotsky never repudiated his policy. Even in the late 1930s Trotsky made clear he would be willing to bloc even with Stalin against restorationist tendencies within the bureaucracy.

To propose a bloc with Bukharin against Stalin raises the question of on what program. It could only be on the program of the struggle for "democracy" against "bureaucracy" in-

dependent of any class assessment. Such a perspective could only flow from a Shachtmanite assessment of Stalinism. And it is in fact within Shachtmanite circles that all these "criticisms" of Trotsky's "tactics" were first raised.

The parallel between Mage's advocacy of a bloc with Bukharin and the Mage-Robertson bloc with Weiss over "democracy" within the SWP is clear. What Mage put forward in this article was a fundamental attack directly against Trotsky and Trotskyism which simply carried out openly the logic implicit in the past behavior of the Robertson group. Even more revealing, this article was printed with the approval of Robertson in *Spartacist* and defended even after Mage left *Spartacist*. In the September-October *Spartacist* the editors state:

*"Wohlforth completes this preoccupation in personality by predicating his case on the assumption of Leon Trotsky's basic infallibility. However, Trotsky was not infallible (indeed, why should he be?); until the bloc with Zinoviev his course in the struggle against Stalinism was disoriented and unclear, but afterwards unswerving to the end."*

It was around the time of the April 1966 International Committee Conference that Shane Mage publicly disassociated himself with *Spartacist* and any connection with Marxism. But before he left he did his best to poison the already difficult situation between *Spartacist* and the IC. Gerry Healy comments in a letter after the Conference to Harry Turner and Bob Sherwood:

*"It should be understood here that Robertson had had at least four months to prepare this document prior to the Congress which he had not done. Instead he brought the anti-Trotskyist Mage into one meeting of the Negotiating Committee which this renegade effectively broke up."*

In answer to this letter Harry Turner wrote in a draft approved by Robertson:

*"Your characterization of Shane Mage as an anti-Trotskyist renegade who broke up a session of the negotiations of the Joint Unity Committee after being 'brought' into it by Robertson is also spiteful and untrue. Mage has recently and publicly revealed political differences with *Spartacist* which in our opinion, effectively removes him from the ranks of revolutionary Marxists. However, he is neither anti-Trotskyist nor a renegade."*

Let us see exactly what the role of Mage was in this period and the exact political nature of what "effectively removed him" from *Spartacist*. In 1966 we described his evolution:

*"Mage's recent evolution is of some relevance to this analysis. Soon after publication of the article under discussion, Mage was brought into the joint unity discussions between ACFI and Spartacist as the economic expert for Spartacist. At this session Mage launched a major attack on the economic perspectives of ACFI, expressing his full confidence in the ability of capitalism to survive without serious economic crisis. Mage saw, instead, that the struggles of the future would occur despite this prosperity because of the alienation of man brought about by the meaninglessness of it all. Robertson and other representatives of Spartacist at this session supported Mage's economic position.*

*"Shortly after this episode Mage turned up at a public meeting held by Spartacist and spoke at length from the floor expressing the position that the working class was no longer a meaningful revolutionary force in the modern world. The Spartacist organization then asked Mage to resign which he promptly did."*<sup>11</sup>

## LSD

We need only add that by fall Mage appeared at a session of the Socialist Scholars Conference along with Isaac Deutscher. He utilized this platform to expound on the virtues of LSD and the inner revolution. Deutscher had to take him up sharply. Our latest report is that he has become a convert of Zen Buddhism, spicing his psychedelic dreams with religious opium.

Shane Mage's road from Marxism to Buddhism is not a personal evolution. It reflects a whole important side of Spartacist. Mage functioned not only as a leader of the Robertson group since 1962 but in that capacity was one of its most consistent opponents of the International Committee. It was this man who openly collaborated with the liquidationist Weiss in 1963 against the International Committee, blocking with her precisely over the question of hostility to Healy and the IC.

When Mage launched an attack on Trotsky—seeking to blame Trotsky for the rise of Stalinism, much in the spirit of Shachtman—Robertson went along with him. When Mage repudiated any conception of an economic crisis and any potential for class struggle Robertson put him forward as his economic expert. When Mage broke openly with Marxism and Spartacist was forced to ask him to resign the Robertsonites still refused to see him as anti-Trotskyist and a renegade.

Robertson could hurl the foulest epithet at the International

Committee and its leadership but the Robertsonites could not even work themselves up to the word "renegade" for a man who openly repudiated Trotsky and the working class.

Mage reveals a whole side of Spartacism. Underneath the bluster and talk of "revolution" stands deep middle class skepticism about the working class and a deep middle class hostility to the proletarian party. If this seems too drastic a conclusion to draw from the evolution of Shane Mage alone, we will now turn to other figures in Spartacist who followed the same path. Mage was not the exception but the rule!

Shane Mage was not the only skeptic to leave Spartacist for LSD. Approximately a year later a small group, led by Peter Friedlander, split away and issued a leaflet asking the question: "Is Marxism dead?" which it answered by saying: "It looks like it." The leaflet went on:

*"Why did Stalinism become a mass movement embodying the most intelligent and dedicated workers and intellectuals, while remaining an organization of mysticism and deceit, a living lie?"*

*"We are tired of the old Trotskyist formula which has nevertheless been the best answer so far."*<sup>12</sup>

But skepticism was not limited even to these examples: It penetrated deep into the central leadership of the Spartacist group, eating away at another key leader of Spartacist, Geoff White. Geoff White played an important role leading the West Coast section of the minority inside the SWP. He played a key role in the split in 1962, was singled out for expulsion as one of the five leaders of the Robertson group in 1963, played a role in the 1966 fusion effort and was West Coast editor of Spartacist until 1968. There is no question but that White was the key leader of Spartacist after Robertson and Mage.

Geoff White played a critically important role for Robertson in the 1962 split. He alone can be held responsible for holding the entire minority in the Bay Area for Robertson against the International Committee. He held the group to a unanimous rejection of the IC statement. He wrote to Gerry Healy at the time:

*"However, should you and the others follow your present course through to the end, you will force a split. For myself, regardless of what may be your attitude toward the non-signers, I would do all in my power to hold together an organization, to seek reunification of the tendency, and to attack loyally and energetically the tasks before us. I am sure that this attitude is shared by most and probably all the minority comrades here who under no circumstances will sign this statement.*

*"It is my profound hope that the unanimity of our rejection of points four and five of your document will encourage on your part a reexamination of the situation in the American tendency, leading to a change in course which will make possible the most effective and rapid creation of a revolutionary tendency in America."*

It is clear from the above that Geoff White started with a perspective of building his group in the Bay Area and that was all. He assumed that Gerry Healy and the International Committee functioned on the same narrow pragmatic grounds and would thus abandon its principled proposals to the American tendency if met with the unanimous resistance of his West Coast group. He made a mistake on that score.

It was precisely in the Bay Area that the first splits from the SWP after the split within the minority took place. Some four comrades—who had stood in unanimity against the IC—had no difficulty in breaking this unanimity to desert the fight in the SWP and in politics altogether. In addition there was the case of James Petras who supported the IC tendency on all questions against Robertson. Petras, however, stood with Geoff White on the grounds of maintaining the unanimity of this Bay Area group no matter what. Petras was soon to leave the SWP as well and to become an academic big wig in New Left and state capitalist circles.

In other words White's unanimous Bay Area group was actually a cover for a whole group which was preparing to desert the fight inside the SWP and politics. White covered for these people by leading the struggle to preserve this unprincipled group against the SWP. This laid the basis for his long collaboration with Robertson.

The approach White took to the question of unification of the two groups in 1965-1966 and the International Committee is particularly revealed in a letter he wrote in May of 1965, when the first unity negotiations were begun:

*"However, the political heart of the matter, I think, is that this will force us to define sharply our attitude toward Healy and his IC. For us, I think this is the real question involved in unity, not TW and his not particularly formidable grouping. We have had a certain historical connection with Healy, but his rupture with us has enabled us to avoid facing up to an evaluation of our current divergences and affinities. If this latest letter from Tim is anything more than just a gimmick, we can no longer just let it slide. Personally, I am much more concerned about our relations to Gerry than to Tim. I think we would make a big mistake to*

*negotiate in any serious way (and how else would we negotiate) with Healy without first being clear ourselves as to what evaluation we make of him, not just what he wants with us. What can he do for us that we can't do for ourselves? What can he do to us? Do we really see the IC playing the role aspired to by Trotsky's FI? What about our relations to Posadas"*

Here we get to the heart of the man and in that way to the heart of the Robertson group. The whole question of the international movement is boiled down by Geoff White to what "they" can do to and for "us." In the spirit of American pragmatism White wants to know what these bloody foreigners can "do for us that we can't do for ourselves."

It is clear from Robertson's conduct at the 1966 Congress that in response to this letter he came to agreement with White on the following: it was a question of what "we do for them and they do for us"; that the IC was not the continuation of the Fourth International of Trotsky; and therefore that there was no need to break relations with Posadas as the IC like Posadas was simply a dispensible place for international fishing.

## RESIGNATION

We now move to July 1968. Some seven years have passed since Geoff White joined the opposition inside the SWP, six of them in collaboration with Robertson. Five years of independent existence in Spartacist have gone by and two of these after the definitive split with the International Committee in April 1966. Geoff White submits his resignation to Spartacist and completes his break with any sort of commitment to Trotskyism. Following in the skeptical shoes of Shane Mage and Peter Friedlander, Geoff White concludes that Trotskyism has been a failure:

*"...There is the long term history of what may broadly be called our movement from the emergence of the Russian Left Opposition to the present...Never, in any of the great historical crises, have we been able to influence the actual course of events...The course of the struggle refuses to follow our preconceptions, and we are unable to make our ideas or our history relevant to it...Judged by its ability to influence the resolution of the political and social crises of our day, or of future days, our existence is, in my opinion, one of total futility.*

*"This is the conclusion I have been moving toward with increasing consciousness at least ever*

*since the Chicago conference, and in some ways, considerably before that. I have been reluctant to follow these thoughts to their logical conclusion for two main reasons. One is the subjective reason of considerable personal investment in the sectarian movement. The other is that despite my confidence in the validity of these criticisms, I have been unable to discover, much less develop, adequate alternatives. Just as I, and I suspect many other comrades, have subscribed to the degenerated workers' state position on the Russian question largely because the visible alternatives present even more horrendous intellectual difficulties and destructive political consequences, so for some time I have subscribed to the validity of Spartacism because I have been able to see no valid alternative."*

Here we have the demoralized, degenerate results of the pragmatic, narrow and middle class outlook of Spartacist. The entire history of Trotskyism is rejected because it did not work by "influencing" the actual course of events. Trotskyism is not rejected because it is theoretically wrong but because despite its theoretical correctness it has not changed reality. Rather than scientifically investigating the causes of the defeats of the 1930s, scientifically confronting all the difficulties of the construction of the conscious vanguard, and relating all this to the new period of upsurge and the construction of the party under these new conditions—Marxism in its entirety is thrown out as being proven to be irrelevant!

This man who led Spartacist on the West Coast from 1963 to 1968, fighting viciously against the International Committee the whole time, admits that he has been questioning the relevancy of Trotskyism since the 1966 founding conference of Spartacist "and in some ways, considerably before that." It is revealed that he agreed with Trotsky's fundamental analysis on the nature of Stalinism and the Soviet Union all along only because "the visible alternatives" present "even more horrendous intellectual difficulties." This leading Spartacist spokesman saw Trotsky's theoretical work as "horrendous" but less so than the theories of Shachtman and others.

Finally he admits to remaining in Spartacist for a period of years as a skeptic because of his "considerable personal investment in the sectarian movement." Just as he proposed the question of the International in 1965 in the spirit of Wall Street, wanting to know what Spartacist would get in "return" which it could not get on its own, so he approached Spartacist itself like a businessman approaches a failing com-

pany into which it has had to sink a certain equity. The method of Henry Ford and the method of Geoffrey White is the same—now even their politics are the same.

## SKEPTICISM

Skepticism is a completely idealist method. Scientific understanding is not seen as a correct reflection of reality but as something independent of reality. At best it is seen as an approximation of reality with a relative "truth" valid until something better comes along. Thought thus floats independent of material reality and is mystical and religious. Material reality also becomes mystical and religious because it is not fully knowable with scientific and rational thought.

Skepticism is the theory of the middle class intellectual during the decline of capitalism. Capitalism in its early dynamic period came very close to a complete break with all forms of religion and mysticism in its struggle with feudalism. The ability of man to know reality and through this knowledge to change reality was the greatest strength philosophically of the bourgeois materialists and rationalists. But in a period of decay, capitalism throws up skepticism because to know reality is to discover the bankruptcy of capitalism and thus the necessity to fight for its overthrow.

The political conclusion of skepticism is to abandon the struggle to overthrow capitalism, to accept capitalist reality as unknowable and unchangeable, and to therefore lead the life of a philistine benefitting materially from this capitalist reality and helping to maintain it through the propagation of religious and skeptical views in the universities. This is the course both Mage and White have taken.

James Robertson's reply to the resignation of this renegade anti-Trotskyist who now views his stay in radical politics as a bad investment is even more revealing.

*"Receipt of White's resignation statement creates mixed feelings. Comrade White, for all his inner corrosion, was a mainstay of our tendency in the Bay Area and nationally. Comrade White was instrumental in holding together the Bay Area tendency at the time of the Healy-Wohlforth split from us in 1962, so that not a single member of the Bay Area tendency went over...However from the beginning of his relationship with the tendency, a skeptical quality and a careful, sanitary aloofness were not absent from his make-up...By our 1966 Founding Conference, Comrade White argued, albeit with stubbornness and unsuccessfully, that we should oppose the possession and development*

*of nuclear weapons by the Sino-Soviet bloc, a position which cannot in any practical way be squared with the defense of the deformed workers' states against imperialism.*

*"His skepticism was not without deep impact, especially his view that perhaps the historic opportunities for proletarian revolution had been missed and humanity faced now only the prospect of nuclear holocaust. In our principal local spokesman and political leader, this quality naturally alienated would-be revolutionaries and militants who came in contact with the Bay Area local, effectively leading to the recruitment of only one or two people in the area in a half decade! Moreover, the great Berkeley student strike of 1964, with many of whose militants White had close contact, was for us a lost opportunity. Comrade White felt strongly at the time that the Marxist movement—i.e. he—had nothing to tell the student radicals! Later his loss of necessary organizational focus and hardness led the local to distribute a leaflet, at a demonstration where many radical-talking tendencies were present, containing the outrageous slogan: 'Join the revolutionary organization of your choice!' Finally, as implied in his resignation, it was White who led our local into the Peace and Freedom Party, a step from which we extricated ourselves satisfactorily and without undue internal turmoil.*

*"So we miss White for what he was and what he might have been in helping forge a revolutionary workers movement in this country. And we note that in his leave taking he was organizationally responsible. He agreed to a gradual withdrawal so as to minimize damage to the Bay Area local in which he played a dominant role until the end of his active period. But given what he had become, his formal departure becomes mainly a new opportunity for younger comrades to build on foundations he helped lay but he himself lacked the strength to help develop."*

Robertson reacted to the desertion of someone who has openly abandoned Trotskyism, questions whether a proletarian revolution is possible in a nuclear age, and urges everyone to join whatever radical organization they please—with "mixed feelings." He even notes that he will "miss White." For half a decade he was willing to coexist with this skeptical anti-Marxist and even allowed him to be the "dominant" political influence in his Western organization. This caused him no worry. But Robertson would not remain in

a common international movement with the International Committee. In fact White is lauded to this day for his hatchet work against the IC and young comrades are urged to build on these "foundations!"

What kind of a political cesspool was Robertson constructing all those years in common with Shane Mage and Geoff White? They all stood together on one issue and only one issue—their opposition to and hatred of the International Committee of the Fourth International, the continuators of Trotsky's struggle for the program of the October Revolution. But the other side of the principled fight of the Fourth International is the skepticism and anti-Marxism of Mage and White.

Can Robertson disassociate himself from this just because he formally holds to "Marxist" orthodoxy? Or is he a man like White trapped by a greater "personal investment in the sectarian movement," playing out his role for as long as he can get away with it? No wonder he misses White and his collaborators and could not call Mage a renegade and anti-Trotskyist. It was precisely renegadecy and anti-Marxism which held the whole lot of them together against the International Committee all along!

# The Graduates: Marcus, Ellens, Turner & Crawford

Let us now take a look at three more graduates of the Spartacist School, graduates who are presently active in radical politics. While these three, L. Marcus, Kay Ellens, and Harry Turner, hold quite diverse political views on the surface, it will become clear that on fundamentals they still stand not only with each other but with Spartacist and the SWP.

We begin with Lynn Marcus, who presently heads the Labor Committee, a group which is proud of the fact it bears no relationship whatsoever with Trotskyism. Marcus spent only a short time in the ACFI and even a shorter time in Spartacist. But the time he spent in these organizations was the time of the April 1966 Conference and his relationship to this Conference is revealing both as to his own political character and that of Spartacist.

The ACFI began collaboration with Marcus in the summer of 1965 at a time when he was still a member of the SWP. Marcus sat out the whole period of struggle between 1961 and 1964. In that period he kept the closest personal relations with Murry Weiss, the leader of the liquidationist wing of the party. However, by 1965 he had come out in opposition to the SWP leadership, particularly around the question of the international crisis and economic perspectives.

In this period Marcus maintained agreement with the ACFI and the International Committee on international per-

spectives, Pabloism, and the construction of the Fourth International—at least in words. The relationship was not, however, without difficulty. At the Montreal conference which paved the way for the unity negotiations with Spartacist, Marcus was urged to remain as long as possible in the SWP to continue the struggle for political clarification of the split from the IC and the expulsion of our tendency. Marcus resisted this and in the end simply pulled out of the SWP without a serious struggle. He also refused to keep the struggle inside the SWP on a principled level, sinking into personal analyses and attacks on sections of the leadership.

However, the first major explosion with Marcus came on the eve of the April, 1966 Conference when the ACFI was forced to reject Robertson's draft document as a basis for an American resolution to submit to the Conference. Marcus was commissioned to work up an alternative draft for the ACFI. This draft, as we have already noted, was not found acceptable by the Coordinating Committee of the ACFI either. If we return to the criticisms of the draft at the time we can see in embryo some of the political views which were to later take shape in the Labor Committee:

*"The struggle for ideological and organizational hegemony is the necessary preparation for the penetration of the mass movement and the winning over of the young workers and minority youth. But this struggle must be understood in class terms, in Marxist terms. Here we get at another weakness of the Marcus document.*

*"Over and over again Marcus uses non-scientific, non-class terminology. This terminology is not only confusing and imprecise, but as is so often the case, reflects a real disorientation. Marcus treats the socialist movement as something apart from the working class. He calls it 'left,' 'radical,' 'radical youth,' 'extreme left,' etc. This movement is seen as something separate from the working class and as essentially synonymous with the students and intelligentsia.*

*"The problem is that Marcus tends to go over into a non-Marxist sociological approach, much as he did last fall in his articles on the SWP. Then, rather than dealing with the central political questions before the SWP he subjected the SWP to a sociological clique analysis which would supposedly reveal its future course. So today he poses the question of our orientation in a similar way. It all boils down to how to connect up the 'radicals' (read sociologically petty bourgeois) with the workers. Our movement is seen as part of the*

*'radical' camp and its task is firstly to achieve hegemony over these 'radicals' and then with the radicals marching under our banner either 'ally' ourselves with the workers or ask the workers to follow us 'radicals' (it is unclear which of these two alternatives he envisions).*

*"This is posing the question completely incorrectly. First of all we must dispense with the classless word 'radical' and replace it with 'socialist movement.' Secondly, the socialist movement must be seen as the conscious expression of the working class, the organization of the class in its most conscious form. This movement may express the consciousness of the proletariat correctly and it may do so incorrectly. It may be a conscious rearguard seeking to hold back the development of the proletariat. But once the socialist movement is not seen as part of the class, then the very Marxist concept of political parties collapses."*

Thus we see embryonically the completely elitist petty bourgeois concepts which were to form the basis for the Labor Committee.<sup>111</sup> Marcus stood at the time in a very middle of the road political position. He agreed with the International Committee on the nature of the international crisis but he stood with the Spartacist on an exclusive orientation towards "radicals" and thus for the building of a propaganda group and not a party. But as yet he stood formally for the Fourth International. We would shortly see which way this political divergence would be resolved.

It was Robertson's break at the International Conference which sent Marcus into a flurry of factional activity, breaking without a moment's hesitation, any ties with the Fourth International. He organized a small faction within the ACFI which in collaboration with Robertson sought to break as many in the ACFI as possible from the International Committee to fuse with Spartacist.

Marcus made no bones about it. He was breaking from the IC because of Healy's supposed organizational practices and not because of any political differences. He stated:

*"At the London Conference and in its sequel it became clear that the continued political hegemony of the SLL had become a decisive obstacle to the founding of a new international and an American Trotskyist movement at this juncture. These issues, immediately thrown up to us in an organizational form, compelled us—as was the case with James P. Cannon in the late Twenties—to explore and face the political reasons for*

*these organizational developments."*<sup>112</sup>

Cannon in the late 1920s was fighting Stalinism and to his credit only took on the struggle which led to his expulsion from the Communist Party when he came into political agreement with Trotsky's thorough political and theoretical analysis of Stalinism. Stalin's political differences with Bolshevism are absolutely crystal clear, particularly on the question of socialism in one country. Marcus could discover no political expression of his accusation that the SLL had organizationally broken with Trotskyism and Leninism.

As a result Marcus simply succumbed to the lowest level of personal slander, conducting a political struggle on a level never witnessed before in a movement sadly accustomed to many excesses in such struggles. It was the incarnation of the petty bourgeois intellectual, totally incapable of making a single objective political statement, flaying his hands at the party. It was subjective idealism gone mad. Here is a typical excerpt from his major factional document "What Makes Tim Wohlforth Run?":

*"In order words, comrade Wohlforth proceeds, although from the standpoint of petit-bourgeois Shachtmanism, to the same political outlook as the SWP Dobbs clique—with which comrade Wohlforth for a long time made the most unprincipled kind of bloc. In general, as we shall demonstrate, he made an upward turn from a nadir of political corruption in February, 1964 at the time of his visit to Britain. Following his assignment to self-development as a Marxist at that time, he enjoyed a rich political development, although not yet freed from many of the rotten tendencies acquired and developed in his past political history. This tendency toward Marxism reversed its direction after the blow-up of the PL fraction in August 1965. Now, having broken with his most viable connections of the recent period, since the March 20th affair, he has very rapidly consummated his political degeneration, back to the rotten, disoriented state characteristic of his period of unprincipled gestures toward the Dobbs clique."*

Gerry Healy wrote in answer to one of Marcus' letters of the time:

*"In all our experiences of polemics and discussions with political opponents here and internationally, we have never read a letter or document which included such vicious subjective characterizations of one's opponents. You wrote this letter under the pretense that it is necessary to*

raise the 'political' level of the Socialist Labour League, as well as the International Committee. We believe that you mean what you say and that this is your political method, which reveal in turn the political level from which you proceed.

"Like Robertson and his 'personal friends' you start from yourself and not from the requirements of the Fourth International and building the revolutionary party in the U.S.A.

"You feel that somewhere along the political road you have been let down by an individual and/or individuals, that you were 'dumped.' Therefore you hit out subjectively and blindly without a serious thought in your head about what you say or do. This is the method of a subjective idealist who despairs of understanding what is happening around him and simply loses his head.

"There is no room for any kind of political compromise between the Marxist method and subjective idealism. The latter represents the theory of the middle class, and as in all the metropolitan capitalist countries this comprises the most unstable section of the population. The political ideology of capitalism is based on idealism, and because of their subservient relations to the most powerful capitalist class in the world, the American petty bourgeois are the hardest to assimilate into the revolutionary party. When we say this, we do not in any way criticize individual middle class comrades. We see them in their environment and class relationships, not as individuals, but within the class society they live in.

"The American petty bourgeois reflect the powerful pressure of American imperialism. They are arrogant and impatient towards the working class, in the United States, and internationally. They start off with the impression that the world is 'theirs' and all they have to do is demand it. They begin with themselves and in doing so reflect the most reactionary Wall Street imperialist pressure. You and Robertson reflect this pressure. Robertson has built nothing more than a clique. Spartacist is not a revolutionary organization based upon the program, policy and democratic centralist rules of the International Committee of the Fourth International, but a group of friends around Robertson.

"The trouble with all subjective idealists such as yourself is that you see revolutionary struggles invariably from the standpoint of conspiracies, the clashes between 'personalities,' etc. Marxists on the other hand begin with the international class

struggle between capital and labor. They analyse the development of this struggle and deduce from this the general direction in which it is evolving. From this international conception they proceed to analyze the struggle inside the countries in which they are working. The Fourth International was founded in 1938 as the World Party of Socialist Revolution with its own statutes and discipline. The political continuation of its work is today embodied in the decisions of the International Conference and the International Committee."<sup>11</sup>

It was this subjective hostility to the international movement which brought Marcus and Robertson together in that period in a common factional struggle against the IC. This was but an expression of the non-Marxist and petty bourgeois elitist theories he had expressed earlier and would develop more openly on his own later. But it also was a denial of his whole principled agreement with the International Committee, which brought him into the ACFI to begin with. Marcus agreed with the IC on economic perspectives, on the international character and depth of the crisis. But he subordinated this scientific and objective materialist agreement to subjective idealist considerations. He did not begin from the international class struggle between capital and labor.

## SPLIT

On May 9, Marcus split from the ACFI in a letter which began:

"While Wohlforth walked along the path of Leninism we walked with him. For that we have no regrets."

And ended:

"We carry out the historic task of fusion with the Spartacist League."<sup>12</sup>

Robertson was happy with his new political bedfellows and announced in **Spartacist**:

"Now, since Wohlforth first called fusion off in an outburst at the March 20 joint membership meeting, over a quarter of ACFI's nearly 40 members has dropped from the organization or joined with L. Marcus and Carol Lawrence in carrying out fusion with Spartacist."<sup>13</sup>

The lead article in that issue, "Battle For Asia," was written by L. Marcus, while his co-factionalist Carol Lawrence was made Managing Editor of the paper.<sup>14</sup>

## SPLIT II

Marcus and Robertson were to devote only a little over a month to "the historic task of fusion." By July they were em-

broiled in a new faction fight, as Marcus discovered that while he shared in common with Robertson his hatred of the International Committee, he had nothing else in common politically. Robertson rejected out of hand Marcus' assessment of the international crisis and even denied that questions of the economy were of importance to the development of the party and its perspective. As Marcus wrote at the time about his "principled" comrades:

*"Members of the Resident Editorial Board have stated positions which cater to anti-theoretical, anti-Marxist sentiments pressing against our ranks from petty bourgeois ideology...It has been stated, in support of those attacks, that Marxist economics is by no means essential to the seizure or holding of state power by the workers movement. That rationale in itself constitutes a cardinal principle of anti-Marxism...How can an organization call itself Marxist, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, reject as unimportant that theory to which Marx and Engels devoted their life's effort? How can an organization term itself Leninist, and deny the cardinal principle of Leninism, that 'Without a revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement'?"*<sup>121</sup>

The answer, Marcus, lies in refusing as you also do to start from the international class struggle and the construction of the Fourth International. How, we might ask Marcus, did a man who prides himself in being a Marxist theoretician end up in such an anti-Marxist cesspool? Again the answer is straightforward: by denying all scientific and materialist thought through subjective idealism. One week after writing the above Marcus was out of Spartacist and writing to the Bulletin:

*"The tragic fact is that the 4th International has been destroyed by various currents of revisionism within it, Healy's included; the task now is to begin those urgent steps toward building a 5th!"*<sup>122</sup>

So much for the Fourth International! Marcus spent some 20 years in the SWP, nine months around or in the ACFI, and seven weeks in Spartacist. It has all disappointed him. He gave the construction of the Fifth International exactly one sentence in one letter. From then on in he happily threw himself into the construction of a student intellectual circle which transforms the Transitional Program into liberal reformist tax proposals, denies Leninism on the question of the party, and refuses at any time to assess historically the question of the Fourth International.<sup>123</sup>

It is critical to understand that Robertson was the vehicle

for Marcus' departure from the Trotskyist movement. Robertson, who knew he had little political agreement with Marcus, used Marcus as a weapon against the ACFI and the International Committee. Marcus, in turn, used Robertson as a way out of the Trotskyist movement. Such unprincipled relations, like Robertson's bloc with the SWP for Tate, are the politics of Spartacism.

The case of Kay Ellens, who led a faction of some of Robertson's closest associates out of Spartacist in August of 1968, sheds additional light, particularly on the question of Spartacist's international relations. The Ellens faction supported the political outlook of the French Voix Ouvriere (VO) group.

Ellens was part of the Spartacist delegation at the 1966 Conference for the very simple reason that she was on her way to Europe to spend a year for personal reasons. In 1966 she contributed her own letter to the Healy Reconstructs collection. It was in its way the most rotten of the lot. Not only did she state that: "We are in agreement with the basic principles of the IC," but also, "In hindsight, it was probably a mistake for Jim not to have attended that session, or to have done or said anything which could be misinterpreted, for that matter."<sup>124</sup>

So Ellens agreed with the IC on "basic principles" and even agreed that Robertson's actions at the conference were "a mistake" at least "in hindsight." Nevertheless she concludes that the SLL holds "an almost Stalinist version of democratic-centralism" and its leadership is "sectarian." So much for basic principles! Ellens concludes her letter:

*"Well, on to a study of the French IC and the Voix Ouvriere groups. I find myself quite curious about them and the rest of the continent."*<sup>125</sup>

Ellens spent more than a year and a half as a supporter of the VO group in France. During this period Spartacist maintained the same kind of "fraternal relations" it had had with the Posadas group. In its November-December 1966 issue Spartacist wrote:

*"Yet Wohlforth assails us for not 'closing the ranks with the IC' by denying that a crime was committed! There is compounded irony here—the Spartacist League is politically closer to the IC than, for example, to Voix Ouvriere, with whom we have strong differences over their state capitalist position on the Sino-Soviet states, their tendency towards syndicalism, and their erroneous assessment of the Fourth International. But we, like VO, recognize that true solidarity with the International Committee forces requires that we help it*

*purge its ranks of criminals, not deny their deeds. The honest engagement of this task itself facilitates the rebuilding of a Leninist Fourth International.*"<sup>122</sup>

This is Robertson in true form. He is politically closer to the IC than he is to the VO group. But he agrees with the VO group that the best way to express this political solidarity with the IC is to collaborate with the VO group to purge the IC of its "criminal" leadership! Need we a clearer statement of Robertson's refusal to begin from principled politics and political agreement?

In 1967 and 1968 Spartacist regularly published ads for VO's publications. Then in the September-October 1968 issue Spartacist gives front page treatment to its assessment of the May-June events. A picture shows Spartacist marching with the banner "Solidarity with Voix Ouvriere—Our Worker-Trotskyist Comrades Outlawed by DeGaulle!" The article states: "The Voix Ouvriere comrades are the only organization claiming to be Trotskyist which has carried out a working-class line."<sup>123</sup> It then makes some criticisms of VO's efforts to bring about a unity with the Pabloites and concludes: "We hope that VO, the French Bolsheviks, have not been disoriented as were the Russians in 1905."<sup>124</sup>

Needless to say, those with whom Spartacist was in principled agreement by their own statement, the French section of the IC, are written off completely and do not merit the designation "the French Bolsheviks." And why? They are accused of "over-reacting against 'student vanguardism,' a real problem" and the Pabloite slanders of deserting the student barricades are repeated.<sup>125</sup> And, crime of crimes, "the OCI did not even have a propaganda stall at the Sorbonne (although every other left organization did.)"<sup>127</sup>

## SPLIT

In the meantime Kay Ellens arrives home from France and submits a lengthy report which describes the "organizational methods" of Voix Ouvriere.<sup>128</sup> As an American trained in the SWP and the Spartacist organization, it was precisely this aspect of VO which most appealed to her. At the same time she formed a bloc with Harry Turner around a general proposal to turn Spartacist toward the working class. Political questions were subordinated to this question—or more precisely a turn toward the working class was seen independently of the theoretical struggle of the Fourth International.

Ellens organized her own personal group and Robertson

found himself being fought with the very same methods he himself had used for so many years. By the time Robertson got wind of what was going on the faction was already solidified. On August 22, 1968 Ellens pulled her group out of Spartacist, breaking not only from Robertson but from her co-factionalist Turner who was left behind in the process. This group has since taken up a semi-underground existence, devoting itself to study and syndicalist work expressing VO's completely liquidationist outlook. The fraternal relations between Spartacist and VO suddenly became anything but fraternal and the pattern of the Posadas episode was repeated. Spartacist's latest resolution comments as follows on this tendency:

*"The tendency which is now Lutte Ouvriere, having lost all organizational continuity with its past, and as a result of longstanding theoretical weaknesses, was disoriented by the failure of the left, in the face of such tremendous opportunity, to decisively shatter the CP's hegemony over the workers. They increasingly abandoned their previous theoretical outlook and urged unification, political differences notwithstanding, with the Pabloists in order to form 'not a Bolshevik party, but a revolutionary party.'"*<sup>129</sup>

And so the "French Bolsheviks" end up seeking to unify with the Pabloites to form "not a Bolshevik party."

Ellens' co-factionalist Harry Turner also played an important role in the 1966 IC Conference. Turner, together with Robert Sherwood, wrote a letter answering Healy and defending the Spartacist split. This letter, also included in the **Healy Reconstructs** collection, has been referred to earlier for its mention of Mage as neither anti-Trotskyist nor renegade. The letter accused the IC of "bureaucratic centralism" and of a "profoundly anti-Leninist organizational approach." It has the following to say about Robertson:

*"As for Cde Robertson and relations within Spartacist, Robertson owes his position of leadership in our organization to his knowledge of Marxism, his devotion to the revolutionary movement, and to the quality of his leadership. Robertson, more than any other leader of our organization, is responsible for the fact that Spartacist has attempted to function as a model Bolshevik organization."*<sup>130</sup>

In 1966 Turner formed a common oppositional grouping with Ellens over the question of a turn toward the working class. He had no agreement with Ellens on the VO group nor did he deal with the principled questions involved in the international split. After his break from Robertson he came in con-

tact with the Workers League and began a discussion on a number of questions. In this period he wrote a letter to Gerry Healy which stated the following:

*"Cde. Wohlforth was quite correct in pointing to the omission of international implications of our struggle against Robertson, in his evaluation of our bulletin, Spartacist League Split, a copy of which was sent to you. Our break with Robertson and the question of our political future requires a more exhaustive examination of the past. A re-assessment of the history and origins of the Spartacist League requires us to take a close look at two turning points, the original split from the International Committee of the Fourth International and the Revolutionary Tendency in the Socialist Workers Party, in 1962, and the exclusion of Robertson at the London Conference of the IC in 1966.*

*"Your judgment that the Robertson group is a petty-bourgeois personality cult, unable and unwilling to build a Leninist party in the United States, proved to be completely valid, and, as a finalized conclusion, preceded our own independently arrived at determination by at least two and a half years.*

*"The internal struggle in the SL, in thoroughly educating us concerning petty-bourgeois radicals of the Robertson genre, has also served to shed much light on the 1962 and 1966 events.*

*"Robertson was not, of course, the intrepid warrior against international bureaucratic centralism, but merely an ego-centric petty-bourgeois refusing to subordinate his ego to the tactical requirements of an international struggle against Pabloist revisionism. His differences were hardly of a character which would have required a revolutionary socialist, which means, of course, an internationalist, to break with an organization. No August 4th was posed. Your intervention was, in fact, necessary in order to prevent Robertson, with his intransigence, from misleading the RT into taking the easy way out. His leftist posture was, in reality, a method for avoiding the necessary internal struggle to try to win the SWP cadre.*

*"By splitting with the IC, he did, in fact, as you have stated, strengthen the SWP revisionists, who were able to out-manuever a disunited left opposition, and close off the minds of many of those in the SWP who might have been reached by us. In addition, many waverers, who might have been held by a united left opposition, became confused and demoralized, and gave up the struggle entirely.*

*"As to the events in 1966, knowing Robertson as we do now, we can also no longer accept his excuse that he was too tired to attend the afternoon session which followed his presentation of divergent positions to the IC Conference. That we accepted it then, indicates the enormous tenacity with which we tended to cling to our illusions.*

*"As to the present, when we examine the practice of the WL, we find a performance in keeping with its professed desire to build a Leninist party in the US."<sup>11</sup>*

Harry Turner thus came very close to a thorough reevaluation of the whole experience and history of Spartacist. But—and it was a big but—he was to pull back from the political logic of this. If Robertson was what the IC said he was, if his splits in 1962 and 1966 were unjustified, if the Workers League's "performance" was in keeping with "its professed desire to build a Leninist party," then we would think Turner would join the Workers League. Turner, of course, had political differences with the IC and the League over Cuba, China and the Arab-Israel conflict. But he did not feel these differences were such as to bar membership in the League.

Finally came the Negro question which he had developed within Spartacist into a special position. On this he wrote:

*"As to the Negro question, the WL's program, flowing from the basic perspective of the world capitalist crisis, for a struggle in the trade-unions to unite workers on a transitional program, which includes the fight against racial discrimination, is one which we can support. However we feel that the program does not sufficiently orientate toward the increasingly militant black workers; that the WL does not sufficiently recognize their revolutionary potential in the struggle, and for the building of a Leninist party; that the same black workers, who are today being increasingly misdirected by Black Nationalists toward reactionary and sterile positions, can be won to a united working class struggle, provided that it prominently poses the question of their special oppression; that the conscious factor, the Leninist party, has a vital role to play in this respect."<sup>12</sup>*

We worked with Turner despite these differences, invited him to attend our membership meetings and held a series of discussions on all these questions. It was our position that Turner's approach to the Negro question was actually an expression of a pragmatic American outlook which saw the Negro in isolation from the international development of the

working class.<sup>133</sup> But we made it abundantly clear to Turner that if he agreed with the League on fundamental international perspectives and would accept its discipline, he was welcome to join and would be given ample opportunity to put forward his special position on the Negro question within the League and within the International Committee.

Turner rejected this, refusing to subordinate this one question to the task of constructing the revolutionary party and the Fourth International. Since that time he has maintained himself as a miniature Spartacist, publishing a monthly mimeographed newsletter devoted primarily to attacks on the Workers League. He has more recently been joined in this work by Robert Sherwood, who split from Spartacist a year earlier than Turner and spent a year or so as part of the Workers League—only to return to his original Spartacist methods.

In 1969 Spartacist summarized what was left of its international work:

*"In the past few years, the SL has developed and maintained a fraternal working relationship with Socialist Current, a small Trotskyist group in England. In addition, we maintain contact with a small group of co-thinkers organized around the New Zealand Spartacist, and with scattered individuals and independent Trotskyist groups internationally."<sup>134</sup>*

Exactly what this particular group is we still do not know since no one in England ever heard of it. Ads for the Socialist Current appeared in Spartacist since 1966. Mention is made of them, particularly of one Edward Crawford, in the minutes of Spartacist in this period. Then we come across the following mention of the group and Crawford in the January 30, 1968 Political Bureau Minutes:

*"Meanwhile, Edward Crawford has abruptly left Socialist Current to join the state capitalists (International Socialism, Cliffites). The question of jeopardy to our relations with S.C. is raised, as Crawford was the closest of the S.C. comrades to our positions."<sup>135</sup>*

## INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISM

We would think that Crawford's evolution into the state cap group would raise more than a question about relations with this Socialist Current group. One would think Spartacist would find it necessary to probe why the "closest" member of this group with which they have "fraternal relations" ended up joining a rotten centrist group like IS. At least we would

think this would be the end of Spartacist's relations with Crawford. But no, in the July 1, 1968 minutes we find the following:

*"Crawford: Very informative letter received, reporting on his trip to France during the French crisis... Crawford is now a very active member of the Cliffites. He has sent us material of the Cliffites and the Irish Workers Group. We have been sending him some of our PB minutes."<sup>136</sup>*

So relations with this very active member of IS continued and not only gossip, but minutes and other internal material were freely exchanged. Then in February of 1969 a letter from Crawford to Harry Turner is printed in the minutes, obviously in answer to an appeal by Turner after his break with Robertson:

*"Why in God's name join Wohlforth? Out of the frying pan into the fire if you ask me. True they produce a fortnightly paper—as full of sectarian rubbish as the Spartacist—but that is about the limit of their superiority... I am in greater sympathy with White when he deals with the faults of the Trotskyites... You will be glad to hear that on 31 Jan. Rouge and Lutte Ouvriere filled the Mutualite with 4,500 supporters who were not Healy's floating lumpens—here today and gone tomorrow—but serious people... These people are serious unlike OCI and FER."<sup>137</sup>*

Such is the character of Robertson's man in London. He considers Spartacist sectarian, agrees with the skeptic White who is breaking from Marxism altogether, and holds up the Pabloite and VO groups in France as "serious" against the IC sections. In the meantime he energetically devotes himself to the building of the state cap anti-Trotskyist swamp in England!

As we have seen in the period from 1966 to 1970 Spartacist has lost whole stratas of its leadership and membership. Its international efforts have led it into collaboration with all sorts of political riff-raff with which it agrees only on hostility to the IC and which in time break with Spartacist, leaving it more isolated than before. Everywhere the unprincipled character of Spartacist comes forward and its constituent elements break away, leaving only a small personal group around Robertson.

All this takes place precisely at a time when the international crisis of capitalism is deepening, class struggles are breaking out on a scale unheard of since the 1930s and the sections of the International Committee are going through a serious period of qualitative development and considerable

growth.

How does Robertson explain this development? What assessment does he make of it? In a presentation to his Political Bureau in November of 1968 he comments:

*"For the first two years of our existence things went better than expected and our efforts seemed to pay off, sometimes even easily. We tripled our size. In the past two years, things have not gone well—often our correct efforts and hard work did not bring results. This is self-perpetuating through demoralization and a tendency for comrades to do their work in a perfunctory manner because they don't feel anything will work anymore. The country is moving right (although this is by no means rock bottom) and under such conditions, we begin to get every imagineable deviation, from Ellenism to Scientology. As Roger A. put it when he resigned 'The old answers may be right, but they don't satisfy us any more.' The tendency is to look for 'new' answers which may be wrong but seem 'new' even if refuted before 1848. An organization which depends on consciousness cannot provide the Wohlforthite-type fake sense of security of an authoritarian assurance that the people on top have all the answers and the crisis of capitalism is just around the corner. But with conscious comrades we can get years' more serious devotion than fake lefts who burn out and disillusion good people.*

*"The rapid growth we experienced originally had inherent drawbacks which have now matured: the expectation of continual success and resulting sense of dismay when we run into problems, high membership turnover, unassimilated (and sometimes unassimilable) people. We have a quickly formed cadre with less than superlative human material—and this includes leadership. During the first year of our downturn, our size was about constant and our turnover was generally a net gain in quality, but we weren't growing. This past year we have actually shrunk in size and had a deep split—numerically not very large, but deep, including about six CC members."<sup>28</sup>*

What Robertson cannot point out is that the turning point between the first two years of Spartacist's growth and the next two years of its decline was the April 1966 IC Conference. It was Spartacist's break with the IC which led to its internal disintegration. Unable to confront this, Robertson seeks to blame objective conditions in America for the decline of Spartacist. He sees the United States as "moving right" and thus

expresses his complete inability to understand the developing crisis in American capitalism.

Wallace is not an expression of a rightward move in the United States but rather a deepening polarization of class conflict coming to the fore. Thus, the Wallace election campaign has been followed by the Postal and GE strikes, the wildcat Teamster strikes, the massive antiwar outpourings, the student strike wave, the growing unrest in the army, etc.

Furthermore, America is seen in isolation from the international world capitalist system. Robertson made these remarks only months after the May-June days in France. Robertson did not see May-June as an expression of an international crisis, the center of which is in the United States. Robertson did not ask why it was that this tremendous vindication of a Trotskyist perspective of working class revolutionary struggle did not lead to the growth and development of Spartacist instead of its splitting and shrinking.

## SKEPTIC

The remarks make clear that Robertson agrees on fundamentals with the demoralized splitters from his movement like Roger A. When he attacks us for "an authoritarian assurance that the people on top have all the answers and the crisis of capitalism is just around the corner," he admits his own skepticism. He is stating that the leadership of Spartacist has no answers, that it has no scientific Marxist understanding of anything, so that they do not know from one moment to the next what to do. Not only does Robertson deny that the "crisis of capitalism is around the corner," but by this statement he denies that it is here now. His talk of "conscious comrades we can get years' more serious devotion out of" is an expression of this whole orientation of building a little propaganda clique which will exist as a "sub propaganda group" for years and years while capitalism booms on and on and America moves more and more to the right.

It is not just the Roger A.'s who are demoralized and skeptical of Marxism, but Robertson himself, who in breaking from the International Committee expressed his complete break with scientific Marxism and its revolutionary perspective.

# The Class Nature of Spartacist

“Any serious faction fight in a party is always in the final analysis a reflection of the class struggle,” stated Trotsky in **In Defense of Marxism**. “The Majority faction,” Trotsky continues, “established from the beginning the ideological dependence of the opposition upon petty-bourgeois democracy. The opposition, on the contrary, precisely because of its petty-bourgeois character, does not even attempt to look for the social roots of the hostile camp.”<sup>129</sup>

The split between Spartacist and the International Committee represented a fundamental break and as such was as much a reflection of the class struggle as the split in the SWP in 1940. As with the Shachtman opposition, the Spartacist has been unable to make any sort of class analysis of the split nor is it able to this day to give a coherent account of its differences with the International Committee. It was precisely this question which came up at the Western Regional Conference in the floor debate with Spartacist:

*“The Spartacist spokesman was asked from the floor to explain what exactly was the central principled difference Spartacist held with the International Committee. The spokesman could not do so. What the Spartacist spokesman did state was that since the American working class was not in motion, what was needed was to intervene*

*wherever things were happening, like the Women's Liberation Movement, and to seek to bring about a 'regroupment.' Another Spartacist later amplified on this, stating that our tactics must be adjusted to the fact that we live in 'peaceful times.' ”<sup>130</sup>*

Of course Spartacist has many “differences” with the International Committee and these differences are important. But the central point to understand here is that Spartacist cannot even now, some four years after its definitive split with the International Committee, make a class analysis of this split or a coherent presentation of its central political differences with the IC. All that comes out is this “position” and that “criticism.”

The article “Workers League Lies” in Spartacist West is written in part in answer to the charge that Spartacist could not and cannot make a coherent presentation of its differences with the International Committee. This article gave them one more time to clarify in print what they could not clarify on the floor of the Western Regional Conference. We will reprint here exactly every word in this article directed at explaining their political differences with us. In the course of this series we have reprinted every single word contained in this article, and some sections a number of times!

*“The Workers League conception of internationalism is a miniscule parody of the old Moscow-oriented Communist parties—only in this case it is a tiny band of pseudo-Trotskyists spouting British chauvinism, instead of Russian...”*

*“We do not, of course, believe these are ‘peaceful times’ or that the working class is ‘not in motion,’ as was charged in the article, and no such thing was said by SL members at the WL conference. We have a perspective of building a Marxist-Leninist party in this country and a truly international movement. Part of this struggle must involve winning over to a working-class perspective those groups involved in special struggles, e.g., women's liberation, SDS, black liberation, etc. We do not take the simple-minded, non-struggle approach of the Workers League: that Women's Liberation is ‘bullshit,’ as Wohlforth blurted out at their regional conference; that SDS is just a bunch of Stalinist factions which the WL is ‘proud’ they never had anything to do with (as a recent Bulletin boasted, although they suddenly decided to come to SDS meetings, and have long been in SMC); that all black caucuses are a priori reactionary, etc., etc. All this is said, of course, in the name of proletarian struggle.”*

*"For them, this means advocating union activity which avoids political questions in favor of simple bread-and-butter demands, as they did when they supported a recent call for a caucus of city workers in the Bay Area which contained not a single political demand, not even a labor party or any mention of racism or the war in Vietnam!"*

*"Yet the WL asks what are our principled differences! We stand on the basis of the transitional program and proletarian internationalism, which they reject in favor of mindless trade unionism and British chauvinism. Their politics can only be a mockery of Trotskyism."*<sup>14</sup>

Let us first take a look at the way Spartacist answers the charge that it broke from internationalism in its split from the International Committee. It accuses us of being a "miniscule parody of the old Moscow-oriented Communist parties—only in this case it is a tiny band of pseudo-Trotskyists sporting British chauvinism instead of Russian." This charge of "British chauvinism" is then repeated at the end of the article.

Spartacist does not approach seriously the question of the Stalinist degeneration of the Communist International itself. Was this just a matter of "Russian chauvinism" and if it was, what was and is the political content of "Russian chauvinism"? If Russian chauvinism is meant to indicate simply that the Russian Communist Party was the leading party of the Comintern and if "Moscow-oriented" is also supposed to mean that Communist Parties in other countries looked for political leadership to Moscow, then Spartacist is repeating the slanders of the social democratic betrayers in the first years of the Communist International. The social democrats sought to avoid the political issues of revolutionary politics raised by the October Revolution in that period by confusing Lenin and Trotsky's leadership of the Comintern with some sort of "Russian" national domination just as earlier they had sought to confuse their political differences with Lenin through slanders of Jacobinism and tyranny. If the charge of Spartacist is that our concept of internationalism is that which dominated the Communist International in its first five years, we confess to the charge.

Trotsky's analysis of the degeneration of the Comintern was a completely materialist one. He saw the destruction of the Comintern as a product of the growth of a bureaucratic caste in the USSR which in order to defend its privileges, destroyed any kind of workers' democracy in the country and transformed the Comintern into an instrument of Soviet foreign policy.

Soviet foreign policy in turn became a series of maneuvers and compromises with capitalist states aimed at allowing the building of "socialism in one country." "Chauvinism" thus dominated the Stalinist Comintern only to the extent that its policies were subordinated to the material interests of the Soviet bureaucracy. Since this bureaucracy rested on property forms thrown up by the October Revolution, workers' property forms, its policy—while counterrevolutionary—was not capitalist and certainly not imperialist. In that sense it was not "chauvinist" in the common meaning of the term as the patriotic ideology of an imperialist state.

In what sense then is our internationalism "British chauvinism"? The only political and material meaning to the concept "British chauvinism" is defense of the interests of British imperialism. This is a very serious charge. Is Spartacist suggesting that the Socialist Labour League—the only party in England to oppose the sending of British troops into Ulster—defends in any sense, in any way, or at any time the interests of British imperialism? Is Spartacist suggesting that the Workers League also supports the interests of British imperialism? Or is it simply charging that the Socialist Labour League carries considerable political weight along with the French section in the International Committee?

## BUREAUCRATIC CENTRALISM

This method of approaching the question of their split with the International Committee goes all the way back to the 1962 split within the minority tendency inside the SWP. At that time they wrote:

*"It is to the enormous credit of the NYC comrades that they stood fast and refused to bow to a device literally borrowed from the arsenal of bureaucratic-centralism which facilitated the downfall of the Communist International in the Nineteen Twenties..."*<sup>15</sup>

In 1966 they once again raise the charge of Stalinism. The editors of Spartacist stated:

*"While Healy largely just rehashes the Bulletin's well-worn lies, these articles further reveal the man's Stalinist-conditioned idea of an International..."*<sup>16</sup>

Further on there is reference to the "Healy regime's anti-Leninist bureaucratism." Harry Turner, writing to Healy in what became the Healy Reconstructs collection, goes into further detail on the same point:

*"You wanted an international after the manner of Stalin's Comintern, permeated with servility at*

one pole and authoritarianism at the other. You are attempting to fashion an international modeled after the internal regime of the SLL and currently in vogue in your youth movement.

*"The question is why such a profoundly anti-Leninist organizational approach should exist. Your origin from a bureaucratically degenerated Communist movement and your carry-over of organizational practices obtained there may be a factor as may traditional petit-bourgeois British insularity acting to produce a caricature of internationalism. An adequate answer will have to be sought in the historical development of an SLL leadership molded under the pressures of social classes. Any serious fight in the party is always in the final analysis a reflection of the class struggle," said Trotsky.*"

## MANNERS

First it is charged that the IC was seeking to build "an international after the manner of Stalin's Comintern." Again we can only state it is not a question of manners, but of a degeneration of an international movement rooted materially in the development of a bureaucratic caste in Russia and reflected in open counterrevolutionary policies of the Comintern. Next, it is simply asserted that this bureaucratism also exists inside the SLL, not only without evidence but without a material explanation of the roots of such bureaucratism.

Then we are told that the political origins of Healy "may be" a factor. It is not asserted that this is the cause, but it might be one factor. What makes this argument of original sin so absurd is not only that one cannot explain a political tendency as important as Stalinist bureaucratic centralism on the basis of the political origins of a single individual, but that if we applied this method to the author of this accusation it would be even more damning! Here is Harry Turner who himself spent over 20 years in the Communist Party attacking Healy, who left the Communist Party in the mid-1930s and spent the time Turner spent in the CP building the Trotskyist movement, hounded both by the Stalinists and the bourgeoisie. Once again we see this tendency to resort to the

method of subjective idealism like Marcus.

Then we get to the argument stolen from the Pabloites of "traditional petit-bourgeois British insularity." It is true, as was pointed out in the polemic with the Pabloites, that Britain is an island and for that state of affairs we certainly cannot blame Comrade Healy. This is another version of the accusation of "British chauvinism." Is Turner seriously asserting that the Socialist Labour League is giving in to the pressures of the British ruling class through the media of the British middle class? If this is the case, then must there not be a political expression in the politics of the SLL of conciliation with imperialism, with the labor bureaucracy in England which serves the interests of imperialism and the like? But no such concrete material analysis is made. We can only conclude that Healy's sole crime is inhabiting an island and that this through some process not explained has transformed him into an authoritarian bureaucratic centralist.

Finally we come to the sentence: "An adequate answer will have to be sought in the historical development of an SLL leadership under the pressures of social classes" and the quote from Trotsky on faction fights reflecting the class struggle: This is an admission that the previous "answers" in the paragraph above were not "adequate." They certainly do not analyze the history of the SLL "molded by social classes." Then why are these arguments put forward at all?

We would think that this section would be followed by a serious class analysis of the SLL since it was clearly not preceded by such analysis. But this is what follows: "The bureaucratic practices of the SLL leadership would seem to relate to the theoretical incapacity shown by the followers of Trotsky after the Second World War with the development of deformed workers' states in Eastern Europe and China." But we were just informed that for an "adequate answer" we must look to the molding of the SLL by social classes. Instead of this we are treated to another idealist argument. The bureaucracy of the SLL is rooted not in material reality, but in theoretical incapacity. And theoretical incapacity is not analyzed as reflecting a material social class such as the pragmatism and theoretical incapacity of the SWP and the Pabloites which has led those organizations to reflect the middle class and through this class, imperialism itself.

If we turn directly to the Spartacist editors of that period we get the same idealist rubbish:

*"ACFI, parodying Trotsky, begs these questions by 'defying' us to explain the 'social roots' of Healy's practices. The Voix Ouvriere comrades have observed that while a bureaucracy such as the*

*Stalinists has a basis in social and economic causes, including the conservative protection of material privilege, Healy's bureaucratism is a product of his incapacity as a revolutionist.*"<sup>145</sup>

That answers that! Against Trotsky's insistence in 1940 that Shachtman back up his accusations of bureaucracy against Cannon with an assessment of the social roots of that bureaucracy, we have counterposed the authority of—VO! Need we remind the reader that these great practitioners of the Marxist method split from the Fourth International themselves around the same time as Shachtman! Everything is reduced to subjective idealist judgments on the capacity or incapacity of individuals. Oh, how the middle class individualist seeks to bring everyone else down to his own level of thinking. Great historical events become reduced to personal characteristics just as they themselves decide their own political course on the basis of personal prestige and subjective feelings.

It is not accidental that the Robertson group virtually stole their characterization of the International Committee from the Shachtman group in 1940. While Shachtman said "bureaucratic conservatism," Robertson says "bureaucratic centralism." In both cases we have a petty bourgeois rebellion from proletarian discipline and principled politics. Here is how Trotsky assessed their position at the time:

*"Cannon and his group are according to the opposition 'an expression of a type of politics which can be best described as bureaucratic conservatism.' What does this mean? The domination of a conservative labor bureaucracy, share-holder in the profits of the national bourgeoisie, would be unthinkable without direct or indirect support of the capitalist state. The rule of the Stalinist bureaucracy would be unthinkable without the GPU, the army, the courts, etc. The Soviet bureaucracy supports Stalin precisely because he is the bureaucrat who defends their interests better than anybody else. The trade union bureaucracy supports Green and Lewis precisely because their vices, as able and dexterous bureaucrats, safeguard the material interests of the labor bureaucracy. But upon what base does 'bureaucratic conservatism' rest in the SWP? Obviously not on material interests but on a selection of bureaucratic types in contrast to another camp where innovators, initiators and dynamic spirits have been gathered together. The opposition does not point to any objective, i.e., social basis for 'bureaucratic conservatism.' Everything is reduced*

### Class Nature of Spartacist

*to pure psychology.*"<sup>146</sup>

It is clear that Spartacist is unable to make a class assessment of the International Committee. It is also unable to put forward in a coherent manner its political differences with the International Committee and the Workers League. These differences of course exist and in fact are of a fundamental nature. But since the very heart of these differences is Spartacist's unprincipled break with the international movement, and it is this that Spartacist cannot confront, everything is necessarily reduced by Spartacist to the level of scandal and this or that isolated point.

We will seek to hack our way through Spartacist West's exposition of its conception of its differences with us and reveal in the process its method and its real political character. They state: "We do not, of course, believe these are 'peaceful times,' or that the working class is 'not in motion,' as was charged in the article, and no such thing was said by the SL members at the WL conference."<sup>147</sup> As there was no stenographic or taped record of the conference, despite the fact that we could produce 35 witnesses to verify that this is precisely what was said, we will instead turn to the written record. We will show that Spartacist has always based its work not on an understanding of the capitalist crisis, but precisely on the conception of peaceful times and the non-motion of the working class.

We have noted that Robertson in 1966 saw the United States in "quiescent times" and on that basis proposed a special orientation toward Black workers as the only section of the class in motion.<sup>148</sup> Certainly, therefore, it would be accurate to state that at least in 1966 Spartacist held the times to be "peaceful" or "quiescent" and if not the whole working class, certainly not the white workers to be in motion. Now let us turn to the most recent resolution of Spartacist, "Development and Tactics of the Spartacist League," dated June 30, 1969:

*"Numerous organizations on the left—but most notably the British Socialist Labour League (SLL) and its followers (and also the Marcusite SDS Labor Committee)—have attempted to substitute for viable political perspectives a sense of pseudo-Marxian 'faith.' These groups attempt to solidarize their members by promising them that an economic collapse is just now breaking which will lift them out of their isolation and replace their constant petty failures with great success. The SLL, in particular, has been screeching about the 'imminent crisis' for years now, denouncing those who were skeptical of this 'analysis' as em-*

*piricists.*"<sup>151</sup>

To maintain that capitalism is today in crisis is to Spartacist a matter of faith, not scientific analysis. We must conclude from this that the "genuine Marxians" of Spartacist hold there is no capitalist crisis and thus of course quite peaceful times with little or no motion of the working class. But if this seems too hard a judgment to make on the basis of this single quote we come to the sentence:

*"The drying up of important arenas of work in the past two years (especially the black struggle), along with the general rightward shift in the general political climate, has led to considerable membership turnover, including one faction fight and split."*<sup>151</sup>

Not only is there no crisis but the "political climate" is shifting to the right. This is the actual perspective of Spartacist as put forward in their own resolution. No wonder this perspective came into such a sharp collision with the outlook of a group of Black students and workers at the WL Western Regional Conference. What is also clear is that for Spartacist this assessment of the political climate and objective situation becomes the excuse for its own failures. The disintegration of Spartacist is thus blamed not on the central perspective of Spartacist and its break from the International Committee but on the objective situation and the non-motion of the working class. Such is the depth of the totally subjective perspective of this group.

The next sentence in Spartacist West states: "We have a perspective of building a Marxist-Leninist party in this country and a truly international movement."<sup>151</sup> We have gone into some detail on Spartacist's "perspective" for building a "truly international movement" and have shown it not only to be nothing more than a cover for its real break with internationalism, but also a completely unprincipled and totally fruitless endeavor. What about its "perspective of building a Marxist-Leninist party in this country"? We noted in our assessment of the 1966 Conference that Spartacist dissolved the "strategy" of constructing the revolutionary party into the "tactic" of building a "large propaganda group."<sup>152</sup> Beginning at all times with itself, rather than any objective considerations—and not having fared so well over the years—the large propaganda group of 1966 ends up in 1969 as: "We must recognize that we are a sub-propaganda group whose primary goal over the next period remains the establishment of a stable propaganda group perhaps ten times our present size."<sup>153</sup>

This question of a propaganda group is not a matter of size or even of day to day tasks. Clearly in this period regardless of the size of the movement, most day to day tasks remain on a propaganda level and even during a period of revolutionary upsurge, propaganda work never ceases to lose its importance. To take the "strategy" of a party and transform it into the "tactic" of a propaganda or sub-propaganda group is to destroy the Leninist strategy of a party and substitute for it the unprincipled personal circle which floats independent of a materially rooted perspective, free from connection with the international movement, not guided by principle, and above all free from the responsibility to give leadership to the working class.

For instance as far as leadership in the working class is concerned, Spartacist writes:

*"Instead, we frankly term our perspective a fighting propaganda orientation, recognizing that for us work in the mass movement has little value unless it has exemplary character; otherwise our involvement will be little more than a next drain of resources from the revolutionary Marxist movement to the mass organizations."*<sup>154</sup>

This means that work in the trade unions is seen as a show-piece with which to push propaganda to impress the middle class. Those conducting this work assume no responsibility for leadership of the working class. This means that the leadership of the class is left in the hands of the labor bureaucracy and the revisionists and all the left talk of Spartacist is exactly what they say it is—propaganda. Of course if there is no capitalist crisis and there is a general rightward political climate there is little objective basis for playing a leadership role. Thus this lack of an understanding of the objective capitalist crisis reinforces the propaganda group perspective of Spartacist, leading to a complete abdication of leadership in the trade unions.

It is precisely this policy which Spartacist carries out in the only union it has been active in for any length of time—Local 371-SSEU of the Welfare Workers in New York City. The result has been that it opposed the necessary unification of the union with the AFL-CIO precisely in order to defend the old SSEU as a nice little fishing pond for propagandists. The question of unification at the time was a life and death matter for the union precisely because we live in a period of capitalist crisis in which the municipal government in New York City, in deep crisis, has every intention of trying its best to destroy the jobs of welfare workers and generally beat back the gains of all its employees. In the last election, the Workers League-

supported Committee for a New Leadership posed the only serious opposition to the two sections of the union leadership running in the election. The Spartacist-supported slate devoted its electoral efforts to attacking our slate in a most slanderous and unprincipled way.

Not only does Spartacist take no responsibility now for the leadership of the working class; it does not even take responsibility for the future of the working class. It states: "Our goal of a regroupment along a revolutionary program remains unaccomplished."<sup>156</sup> Spartacist does not see itself as the force which must lead the working class to power in the future, but rather simply as propagandists which will bring about some sort of "regroupment" of forces for this task. Thus the conception of a propaganda group becomes an organizational expression of Spartacist's theoretical skepticism. Since it clearly states that it does not hold the position "we are the party," its theoretical connections have only a very relative validity.<sup>156</sup> It is very much an organization cut loose from any international mooring and history, seeing itself floating through a relatively tranquil period of non-crisis, carrying on certain propaganda tasks until such time as a revolutionary party can be built—by whom, it is not quite sure, and around what program is also not clear.

This question of a propaganda group orientation has a history to it. It played a very important role in the evolution of the Shachtman organization precisely in a period when Robertson was a member of that organization. When the Shachtmanites emerged from the SWP in 1940 they formed an organization called the "Workers Party." While this organization was centrist to the core and functioned more in the propagandist circle spirit of Spartacist than as a party, it considered itself a party until 1948.

During this period at least large sections of the organization considered their group to be part of the Fourth International, or more precisely a faction within it even though they had been expelled from the Fourth International. In 1946 Shachtman actually made certain maneuvers to be readmitted into the Fourth International on the basis of recognizing two sections in the United States. While these moves had largely the character of a maneuver aimed at a section of the SWP—the Goldman-Morrow group—which was breaking in its direction, it did reflect the fact that a certain confusion still existed as to the relationship of the Shachtman group to the Fourth International and Trotskyism.

By 1948 Shachtman began a sharp movement to the right under the pressures of imperialism and McCarthyism. He

began this movement precisely by breaking with the conception that the Workers Party was in any way a "party" or sought to be a party. In 1949 it changed its name to the Independent Socialist League and was well on the way to viewing itself not as a dissident faction within the Trotskyist movement, but as a wing of the social democracy. Time was to reveal that its leading section was to become the right wing of the social democracy.

In August of 1948 Max Shachtman wrote an article entitled "Party or 'Propaganda Group?'—The Position and Orientation of Our Party." Here is the essence of Shachtman's argument:

*"Our aim is to become a revolutionary mass party, that is, a political vanguard organization capable of leading the working class to the struggle for proletarian power and the establishment of socialism... We are not yet a party. We aim to become one..."*

*"The Marxist movement, even if we do not confine it to the Trotskyist movement but extend it to all those (save the outright reformists and the Stalinists) who claim adherence to Marxist politics, is reduced today to the state of a propaganda group. Nowhere in the world is it the political party of the working class. Nowhere is it even a political party of the working class, if by the term political party we mean, as we should, a vanguard organization able to speak and act in the class struggle in the name of a really significant section of the working class and with its conscious support..."*

*"The course which we have proposed to the Marxists and the Marxist groups wherever it is possible to pursue it, is well known. 'Abandon all pretense of being a party of the proletariat, including the name 'party,' and become a part of the proletariat.' In our view, this means that the Marxist groups should everywhere enter the broader democratic political movements of the working class and constitute themselves as the loyal left wing tendency. 'Loyal,' here, means the deliberate resolve to go through the experiences of the workers in these movements—again and again, if necessary; to build, strengthen, and defend the common movement from all subversive attacks; to become the broad left wing which seeks to convert them into genuinely socialist organizations; and not to enter for the purpose of 'raiding,' that is, a Commando operation to capture a few militants and promptly withdraw them for the purpose of*

*reconstituting the isolated and uninfluential sect...*

*"What we are doing is to follow the good old advice of saying what is. We are not a party so let us stop calling ourselves a party and trying to act like one. We are a propaganda group, let us say so and act like one to the best of our ability. As such, let us enter deeply into the mass movement with our men and women and our ideas.*

*"We are working to build a great party of labor with a revolutionary socialist program and leadership. We set about the task without preconceived dogmas about how this party will finally come about, without a narrowly-prescribed road that we insist the working class must trod at all costs."*

Here we have the whole rationale which led Shachtman to liquidate into the right-wing Socialist Party a decade later. But we have more than this—we have all the cynical, skeptical elements of the Spartacist perspective. Note that Shachtman defines a "party" in a quantitative sense in order to claim that since no revolutionary party has mass support, all such parties are not parties. This is the same rationale used by Deutscher to oppose the formation of the Fourth International itself. It is the same rationale used by Robertson to explain why Spartacist is not a party.

Once Shachtman establishes that only propaganda groups exist, he then makes clear that the function of such groups should flow from their self-conception as a propaganda group. This function then becomes liquidating oneself in "broad left wings" of the traditional worker's organizations and parties in a "loyal" way, seeking to influence their direction in a broadly "socialist" way. Thus the attacks on "sects," "narrowly prescribed roads" and "Commando raids."

The function of a propaganda group as Shachtman saw it was to influence others to take up its program and propaganda and in the meantime to subordinate oneself loyally to traditional parties and their traditional fake left wings. The talk of "preconceived dogmas" is simply an expression of skepticism about Marxism itself.

Starting this way Shachtman ended up being the loyal "left," and in some cases right, wings of the Liberal Party and the Americans for Democratic Action. He finally took over the SP and transformed it into a pro-war, pro-Humphrey wing of the Democratic Party. Shachtman even supported the "loyal left wing" of the invasion force which landed at the Bay of Pigs in Cuba! Needless to say these formulations were to find a new advocate in Pablo only a year or so after Shachtman

first formulated them.

For Spartacist the propaganda group formulation serves a similar political function. Shachtman proposed integration within the "mass movement" through an avoidance of serious struggle with the traditional leaderships of these movements. Spartacist opposes doing anything in the mass movement outside of exemplary propaganda. In both cases they recognize that it is not the function of a propaganda group to lead.

Flowing from this conception of itself as a propaganda group existing during a relatively peaceful period, Spartacist simply scurries around the body politic like the parasite it is, seeking sustenance where it can find it, hoping in this way to add a member here or there—moving slowly from being a sub-propaganda group to someday becoming—a propaganda group! This is the meaning of Spartacist West's statement: "Part of this struggle must involve winning over to a working-class perspective those groups involved in special struggles e.g., women's liberation, SDS, black liberation, etc."<sup>14</sup>

Beginning with what is—which is that at present, middle class radicalism dominates the movement, breaking up the working class into "special struggles" based not only on divisions in the class but unity with other classes—Spartacist ends up simply fishing in this or that group for members. Its approach to middle class radicalism is in no principled way different from the SWP or any other of the revisionist and Stalinist groups. It pushes a different combination of programmatic points, never once opposing the very essence of the question—the organization of the movement on other than a class basis.

Thus Spartacist goes on to characterize as "simple-minded" and "non-struggle" our rejection of a separate women's liberation movement and our opposition to the organization of caucuses in unions on the basis of race. We counterpose to both anti-working class forms of organization and the popular front politics which necessarily emerge from those forms, the organization of workers in caucuses on a class program which takes up as part of a general fight of the class around transitional demands the fight against any special discrimination against Black or women workers. We see the political expression of this in the fight for a labor party.

The same goes for SDS. Spartacist West objects to our characterization of the basic factions in SDS as "Stalinist." It is clear that specifically Spartacist objects to our characterizing the Progressive Labor-dominated SDS as Stalinist. It characterizes PL as follows:

*"On impulse, PL might be characterized as*

*"Trotskyism with a prefrontal lobotomy." PL's strength has been its desire to see a proletarian revolution in the U.S.—which is in a nutshell the essence of the Trotskyist rejection of 'Socialism in One Country'...PL's subjectively revolutionary impulse has caused them to come up with positions which are essentially an unconscious bad paraphrase of our analysis, often several years later and after having denounced as 'counter-revolutionary Trotskyism' those very positions."*<sup>114</sup>

Looking at PL purely in a subjective way and being unable to expose the fundamentally Stalinist character of that organization, at the recent Cleveland Conference, Spartacist openly lined up in support of PL, claiming its program represented a "class line" against the SWP-YSA forces. Just as Spartacist openly collaborated with the SWP against us, particularly with the Healy Reconstructs and the Tate Affair, so more recently it lines up with PL and devotes almost its entire floor time at a conference of 1500 people in a vicious polemic against the Workers League.

We are then accused of abstaining from intervening in SDS and then suddenly attacked for intervening in the more recent period in SDS and in the Student Mobilization Committee. What Spartacist confuses is a principled intervention in SDS or PL which opposes the essence of SDS as an organization of student radicalism and the essence of PL as a Stalinist organization, with an adaptation to student radicalism and Stalinism. To the extent that the Workers League has from time to time made this confusion in the form of abstaining from any serious intervention it was simply expressing the other side of Spartacist's adaptation. This was certainly the case a year or so ago. Then we come to the sentence:

*"For them, this means advocating union activity which avoids political questions in favor of simple bread-and-butter demands, as they did when they supported a recent call for a caucus of city workers in the Bay Area which contained not a single political demand, not even a labor party or any mention of racism or the war in Vietnam."*<sup>115</sup>

This "damning" indictment is repeated at the end where "mindless trade unionism" is combined with "British chauvinism" and counterposed to Spartacist's advocacy of "the transitional program and proletarian internationalism." But even a cursory look at the real situation reveals that this "mindless trade union" accusation is about as substantial as Spartacist's proletarian internationalism.

While it is true that the call for a caucus did not contain political demands it should be noted that at the actual

meeting of the caucus in question the Workers League carried out a very harsh fight for the labor party and a general political perspective. During the May student strike wave the Workers League alone carried out a campaign throughout the country within the trade union movement to bring out the trade unions against the war and on a political program. The Workers League has likewise fought for trade union action against the repression of the Panthers and every manifestation of racism within and outside the labor movement.

So what is left of Spartacist's accusation of "mindless trade unionism"—nothing but the thinnest slander. But this has become more and more the hallmark of the Robertson group. For instance, they are fond of distributing a pink leaflet with a rooster on the top called "What is the 'Workers League?'" Though first issued in November, 1967 it is still distributed on all occasions. It concludes:

*"If Wohlforth is a political 'operator,' always on the lookout for a short-cut, the successive groups that he has built and had collapse have evolved into a centrist literary sect, notable for its vulgarity, superficiality and a James Burnham-like worship of 'strong,' violent masters like Healy or Mao. Thus the Wohlforth-Workers League—Young Workers League is not the organization for serious, class-conscious workers or working-class youth or radical intellectuals or black militants either. A group such as Wohlforth's can make no contribution to the coming American October; it must be ruthlessly swept aside as divisive and parasitic."*<sup>116</sup>

What we have here is essentially the same kind of personal subjective slander and "analysis" which characterized Marcus' contributions to the construction of a "fifth international." It has become increasingly difficult for Spartacist to write a coherent sentence against our movement which has any serious political content. Such statements about "ruthlessly" sweeping the Workers League aside makes clear their intent, though their ability to do so is another question.

## POSITIONS

The Spartacist group has, of course, a number of political positions. Some of these, such as its formal assessment of Pabloism, come from the International Committee. Others, such as its support to the Liu faction in China against the Red Guards, have roots precisely in the Pabloite movement. Others, like its conception of itself as a propaganda group, come from the Shachtmanite movement from which

Robertson never fully broke. Still others, like its position on Cuba, were actually false political conceptions worked out in an early period of our development only to be rejected in the course of further theoretical progress.

There is, however, nothing distinctive about the politics of the Spartacist group. The combination of positions at any time may be distinct from that of other organizations, but the positions as such always bear the mark of origin somewhere else. In this sense Robertson is very much the political pack rat who has constructed for himself a political nest out of bits and pieces of ideas and programs he has picked up in his political travels over the years. One cannot reach any understanding of the essence of Spartacism on the level of the individual political positions of the organization.

When we strip away the political cover and look at the whole evolution of Spartacist all that is left is the individual Robertson and the small circle which supports him. Since the group does not proceed from any international principled perspective it can only proceed from itself. It is in this sense that the Robertson group resembles more than anything else the Abern group.

*"If we subtract everything accidental, personal and episodic, if we reduce the present groupings in struggle to their fundamental political types, then indubitably the struggle of comrade Abern against comrade Cannon has been the most consistent. In this struggle Abern represents a propagandistic group, petty-bourgeois in its social composition, united by old personal ties and having almost the character of a family."*

It was this "family" Trotsky refers to which Robertson began with all along. It was its protection which led him to break from the International Committee. It is to its propagation that he presently devotes his energies. But this "family" does not exist isolated from social classes. In fact, the essential characteristic of the middle class is its subjective idealism; that it begins with its own individuality.

Through an organization like Spartacist this subjective idealism becomes organized into a weapon aimed directly at the revolutionary party. The only consistent politics of Spartacist since 1966 has been its attacks on the Workers League and the International Committee. PL can be subjectively revolutionary and objectively "Trotskyist," and the SWP can write "accurate" pamphlets on the International Committee, but the Workers League is treated to such epithets as:

*"A parallel organizational pattern of frame-ups, justifications of violence within the workers move-*

*ment to suppress the expression of views, condoning the use of capitalist courts to silence working-class opponents, lies and the witting use of liars, is the characteristic trait of the Wohlforth group under its successive sets of names and initials."*

## HATRED

Precisely because it is motivated by subjective considerations and lives particularly on its deep hatred of the Trotskyist movement, its role is very much that of a gun for hire. Neither tradition nor any objective political consideration places any limit on what this group can and will do. Its only criteria is—as is true of any middle class philistine—what will advance itself. It is impossible to determine exactly where this group will end up. It can continue to exist as long as Robertson desires. It can always find some thin sustenance in the eddies of the middle class radical movement.

Its strength derives from the weakness of the movement and as the working class matures politically, this can only sap its strength and throw it into irrational gyrations. Such is the way it has reacted in the recent period to the development of the International Committee internationally, particularly the publication of the daily **Workers Press** in England, and with the growth of the Workers League with the launching of the weekly **Bulletin**.

Because idealism has a class base in the middle class and a class function in derailing the movement of sections of the middle class and the working class toward materialism, it must continue to assert itself in our movement. It grows, as we have seen, out of a pragmatic and nationalist outlook. Wherever it grows it pits the individual against the perspectives and needs of the proletarian party.

This is why this series on Spartacist is important. The evolution of Spartacist shows the dead end of subjective idealism. Our main concern is not with Spartacist as such, but with a new generation of revolutionaries who can learn some rich lessons from the painful but necessary experience our movement went through with Spartacist in the critical period of its formation.

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## The Wohlforth League:

# COUNTERFEIT TROTSKYISTS

There is a strong objective need to deal with the Workers League of Tim Wohlforth at this time. The WL, like the Spartacist League, claims to embody authentic Trotskyism and to oppose the Pabloist revisionism of the Socialist Workers Party-Young Socialist Alliance (SWP-YSA) from the left. But the WL by its many indefensible, anti-Trotskyist positions, actions and gyrations helps to stabilize the YSA on its rightward course by serving as a ready-made "horrible example" for the Pabloist leadership and hardens in anti-Trotskyism young militants who take the WL as good coin. We have written at length in the past about the opportunistic course and conduct of the Wohlforth group and have documented its origin and development extensively in *Marxist Bulletins*. This article will therefore center on some of the more significant recent extensions of the WL's course.

The WL for its part has been devoting an extravagant amount of space to us in recent weeks in its organ, the *Bulletin*. We want to defer consideration of the Wohlforth series, "What is Spartacist?" (which at this writing has reached 5 parts, each 4 pages in length!), which is so full of grotesque misrepresentations, deliberate obscurantism and out-and-out lies that our reply must of necessity be detailed and documented at greater length than is suitable here. In addition, we hereby challenge Wohlforth, as we have many times in the past, to a *public debate* on the history of our two groups and their political differences. We must say, however, that we do not expect it at this late date; the Wohlforth group has never dared to emerge from the security of its own organ to combat us politically on neutral ground.

But leaving aside definitive treatment of the Wohlforth "What is Spartacist?" series, his characterizations of the SL are absurd on the face of it. We are portrayed as selling out simultaneously to every left current under the sun—the SWP, Stalinism, Black Nationalism, the International Socialists, Lynn Marcus, Posadas, etc.—while carrying on throughout our additional task as "the fingerman for the world capitalists." The sellouts attributed to us are so all-sided that one is left only a pattern of conduct so incomprehensible as to recall the absurd and contradictory accusations leveled by Stalin against the Trotskyist "counter-revolutionary wreckers" in the 1930's. The WL's substitution of slanderous nonsense for polemical criticism is inte-

grally related to the same pattern of conduct they undertake elsewhere.

"Only the Workers League . . ."

To a casual *Bulletin* reader the immediately striking quality of the WL is its strident sectarianism. They sneer at women's liberation as non-proletarian and boast, "The Workers League is proud of the role it has played in relationship to SDS. We have had absolutely nothing to do with that mess." (*Bulletin*, 14 July 1969) As if isolation from the ideological battles of this country's most radical youth were something to be proud of! They blow their own horn even at the expense of destroying their credibility; thus reporting a trade union conference where several tendencies (including the SL) called for a political party of labor, or an anti-war protest where several tendencies (including the SL) demanded military victory to the NLF side, characteristically the *Bulletin* will complacently state that "Only the Workers League" called for the labor party demand, or Viet Cong victory, or what have you. But within this sectarian framework, the striking quality of actual political work by the WL is gross, even childish, opportunism.

### Cops and Bosses Do Not a Labor Party Make

Most *Bulletin* trade union reportage is based solely on a hasty reading of the *New York Times*, not on WL union involvement. The WL's real union work is concentrated almost exclusively in the New York white collar field, where they have several leading supporters. Their conduct here is archtypical of all their practices. Against even the qualms of local union officials, the WL supporters have insisted on supporting and upgrading as "fellow workers" the despised welfare guards whose main appetite is to get the legal right to carry guns, the better to intimidate and attack the desperately abused welfare recipients. These are the same guards who have helped to physically break a series of welfare workers' strikes. The WL supporters even defend the "right" of welfare directors—i.e. high-level management—to be members of the union and even run for union office! The 13 July *Bulletin* also solidarizes with the grievances of campus cops, whose job it is to "protect" campus property against radical students and "outside agitators." Behind the WL pro-cop line stands the most fundamental reformist belief. To support the cops' aims of better pay and better conditions (e.g. guns) to do better their job of oppressing all but society's property owners, of enforcing capitalist "law and order,"

is a fundamental betrayal of a class line. Cops are not workers—no more than Army generals or FBI informers, who also work for wages. We want neither hungry cops nor well-fed cops, but their replacement by workers' voluntary patrols, drawn from union members, welfare clients, students, etc., to protect not the bosses' order but the masses. The WL position shows they are in favor, not only of the racist and murderous status quo, but even of the racist murderers.

On the Black question itself, the WL has swallowed its earlier appetites to conciliate the SWP's Black Nationalism and, under the tutelage of Healy, adopted a position which caters to white racism. In the name of the very real need for working-class unity, the WL adamantly concludes that "Black Causes Are Reactionary" (headline from 21 April 1969 *Bulletin*) regardless of the circumstances of the particular Black workers or the program of the given caucus. But it is not just racial consciousness that cuts across class unity; it is *racial oppression*. The WL demands class unity on a *reactionary* basis and tells Black workers they must wait to struggle against their exploitation and oppression until the consciousness of all workers reaches the same level. This entirely belies the whole thrust of Trotsky's concept of transitional organizations.

### "Hard Hat" Conciliation

What this cops-bosses-whites accommodation adds up to is gross conciliation to the "hard hat" mood of conservative sections of the labor movement. This conciliation is not new to the Workers League. When two years ago they launched their "Trade Unionists for a Labor Party" the essence was already there. The TULP 5-point platform deliberately omitted any reference to *either* racial oppression or the Viet Nam war, and the *Bulletin* (18 December 1967) explicitly defended these omissions when SLers protested that these questions were central to the class interests of workers. In a similarly opportunist manner, the WL's West Coast supporters walked out of the Bay Area "Committee for a Labor Party" over the CLP's principled opposition to militants relying on the bourgeois courts to fight union bureaucrats.

At the recent Chicago "Rank and File" union conference the WL representatives, in refusing to sign the SL oppositional statement, finally admitted that we each mean a different thing when we call for a labor party. The WL looks towards pressuring the existing union bureaucracy on their present

basis to build a labor party, a purely anti-Trotskyist, reformist approach. A political party representing the interests of workers can only be built on the struggle against the treacherous labor "leaders" and for the Trotskyist program. The cynics of the WL would have us think that more backward workers and ambitious bureaucrats will be the driving force to politically counterpose labor to the capitalist class. A party such as TULP's projected formation which did not fight racism and imperialism is a far cry from the labor party which Trotskyists have always fought for.

Most recently, the WL has committed yet another betrayal in the labor movement. In that same white collar union, when a coalition of liberals, Black Nationalists and right-wing Stalinists emerged to oppose the incumbent union leadership, the WL supporters called for a vote to this slate in the runoff on the grounds that when it was elected it would prove to be no better than the incumbents! (27 April 1970 *Bulletin*) Their rationale was that they wanted them elected to expose them in office before those who had illusions. This argument, one of the standard Leninist arguments explaining critical support to e.g. the British Labour Party against the Tories, has precisely no meaning here, for it rests upon the existence of a class difference between the contenders. No doubt many union militants did have illusions about the hustlers of the more left-talking slate, just as many anti-war militants had illusions about McCarthy or Kennedy. But Trotskyists do not play "lesser evil" politics unless there is a real, i.e. class difference between the alternatives, like Labour vs. Tory. The WL was just maneuvering in the two-bit game of union politics, for the sheer organizational advantage of telling their followers they held the "balance of power" at the cost of any claim to principle.

#### SWP and PL—A Conflict of Appetites

In 1967 the WL, which had appetites toward the Maoist Progressive Labor Party (PL), offered a defense of PLers who, in a fit of anti-Trotskyism, physically assaulted SWPers distributing election literature at a rally: "they [PL] are not incorrect in assuming that these are people who are scabbing on the Chinese Revolution. Their hostility is quite understandable." (*Bulletin*, 25 September 1967) The WL, for petty factional advantage, thus justified gangsterism instead of political debate within the radical movement. (Somewhat later, in a typical WL somersault, they declared themselves gung-ho for the self-same SWP election campaign they had denounced.) Now, following recent incidents of PL violence against SWP-YSAers in Boston, the WL piously avails itself of all the principled ar-

guments against gangsterism and exclusionism within the movement. In their appetites toward the YSA, they praise themselves to the skies as the defenders of free speech on the left, hoping nobody will remember their earlier shameful conduct.

That the WL's attitude toward exclusionism and gangsterism is determined not by principle but by appetite is further shown by their conduct at the Cleveland conference of the Student Mobilization Committee, run of course by the YSA. When the PL-SDSers were suppressed and justifiably raised a clamor against the bureaucratic manipulations of the conference leadership, the WL solidarized with the YSA (on the grounds of "Stalinism vs. Trotskyism") and denounced the victims for their unruly conduct. And this despite the fact that the criticism of the PL-SDS contingent was from the left and in the main correct, in opposition to the overwhelmingly class collaborationist nature of the SMC! It makes no sense at all for the WL to pose its behavior as "Stalinism vs. Trotskyism" when the essence of Stalinism, as of all anti-Marxist revisionism, is the subordination of the interests of the working class to alien class forces—precisely the role of the SMC in the anti-war movement, precisely that which the PL forces, for all their deficiencies, are correct in opposing.

Of a piece with this conduct is the 15 June *Bulletin*, which comes out for Mao and Sihanouk (the "patriotic prince") in Indochina. It might be thought that this line is just a continuation of their "Red Guards," "Arab Revolution" line and their soft, anti-Trotskyist attitude toward Ho Chi Minh and the Viet Cong. But given the WL's long-term pattern of making international principles of out miniscule factional appetites, their real aim is evidently to rally round Bill Epton and other PL dissidents who believe PL goes too far to the left in criticizing Sihanouk and, by implication, the Chinese government. To be sure, PL has deep contradictions—and these, flowing from their Stalinist heritage, are, without resolution, ultimately decisive in disqualifying them as a revolutionary tendency—but the WL is seeking to embarrass PL for one of its strengths, a strength which tends to isolate PL from more orthodox Maoists. Thus the *Bulletin* has recently made much of PL's expulsion of Bill Epton, one of its founders, but in the process has suppressed half of the Epton group's case against PL. Along with a catalogue of PL organizational atrocities, no doubt most of them accurate in the main, Epton berated PL for its criticism of Sihanouk and its polemics against "Marxist-Leninist" parties and "liberation movements." Thus, for petty factional reasons the WL has again falsified, ne-

glecting to point out that the main political thrust of the Epton document is criticism of PL from the right.

#### The Sherwood Affair, Or How to Defend the Indefensible

The 5 June 1967 *Bulletin* carried a front-page editorial entitled "No Individual Cop Outs" presenting there the standard Leninist position, which we hold, that anti-war militants must not evade military service by individual draft resistance which ensures their isolation from the mass of working-class conscripts. Well and good. But the WL was willing to betray this principle the first time the opportunity presented itself, in the person of one Robert Hartley Sherwood (who had earlier left the SL by signing one of the usual wretched pacifist-Stalinist-SWP popular front "peace" calls). On his way through New York, Sherwood joined the WL, then continued to Canada to avoid the draft. There he acquired the status of a landed immigrant and became the WL spokesman there. Such an action, while fully legal, was a gross betrayal of the WL's public stand. The SL publicly pointed out the rotten opportunism of the WL, and they gritted their teeth, until they found an out. The Canadian authorities found an omission in Sherwood's papers and for a brief period threatened to deport him. The WL immediately declared that we had deliberately "fingered" him by our exposure of their rotten private turnabout, stating in an article entitled "Spartacist Aids Rulers": "We state unequivocally that the Spartacist League acts as the fingerman for the world capitalists." (*Bulletin*, 2 December 1968) However outrageous, such a serious accusation must be dealt with.

The WL's inability to pass up the recruitment of one (badly tarnished) member, just because of one major Leninist principle, could not be ignored. And like the WL, the Stalinists have often sought to retreat behind charges of "red-baiting" inside unions when Trotskyists exposed them for their sellouts, but despite these anguished guilty cries the necessity to call the CP to account for its betrayals remained.

While Sherwood's legal case was still pending (and after the WL had made its scandalous accusation) the SL, in keeping with our principled policy of defending all radicals against ruling-class repression whatever our political differences, sent the WL-Sherwood defense committee an official statement of support and a \$10 donation. And the WL of course readily accepted the money! Thus either the WL knowingly accepted money from "police agents" or else they acknowledge that their accusation was of course a vicious, baseless slander.

The pattern here is a very simple  
(Continued Next Page)

## ... WOHLFORTH

repetition of that of their mentor Gerry Healy in England, when he had an opponent (Ernie Tate of the SWP-affiliated United Secretariat) beaten, then compounded his outrageous conduct by threatening to take Tate to the bourgeois courts for protesting. To further justify themselves, the Healyites then escalated this to a general defense of their using the courts against opponents and union bureaucrats ("IC Statement on Tate Allegation," February 1967). (This reliance on the repressive apparatus of the capitalist state is cut from the same cloth as, but is more self-serving than, the SWP's 1963 call for U.S. troops to the South to protect Black civil rights!) Caught by a public revelation of an overt betrayal of principle, the WL, like Healy, tried to take refuge in deepening the worst consequences and implications of their action, seeking to silence us and playing right into the hands of the Stalinists, who have sought to slander the Trotskyists as police agents since before the Moscow Trials.

Characterization of the conduct of the WL is not exhausted by noting its ever-increasing opportunism in a sectarian shell. The opportunism itself contains two characteristic parallel streaks: 1) working both sides of the street at the same time (e.g. "Only the WL has fought for the victory of the Viet Cong" while denying the war is an issue of interest to TULP); 2) complete 180° reversals in line even every few months (e.g. conciliating the SWP, then PL's beating of SWPers, then back again). The deep-seated contempt of Healy-Wohlforth for their followers, and their mockery of any semblance of Marxism, has been seen before. Comrade Lenin's term for such people was *political bandits*.

### Internationalism

To be sure, under pressure a knowledgeable WL cadre might be forced to admit the factual and essential truth of

everything we have written about his organization and still be unperturbed. When all else fails, the WL always invokes its crowning glory—its "internationalism." The argument runs something like this: We are part of the Fourth International and you are not; the IC is lineally descended from Trotsky himself; its core, the British Socialist Labour League, has a daily paper; we have never opposed Gerry Healy on any subject; you oppose the IC and are therefore anti-internationalists, petty-bourgeois American chauvinists who refuse to subordinate yourselves to international discipline. Thus our not-so-hypothetical WL member, armed on a micro-scale with the same assurance of a Stalinist apparatchnik in the Comintern, asserts as self-evident exactly that which experience disproves: namely, that international connections are the only proof, and are sufficient proof, of internationalism.

But organizational loyalty to the Healy-Banda group (and their politically far superior but internationally quiescent French allies, the Lambert group) simply evades the struggle which we of the SL face: to rebuild the Fourth International through a complex process of splits and fusions among existing "Trotskyist" groups combined with intervention into the working-class struggle directly. The Healyites simply despaired of the outcome of such a struggle, and contented themselves with being big fish in small ponds, in setting up the IC as yet another competing spurious "Fourth International" like the United Secretariat and numerous others.

Factually pivotal to the spurious nature of the Healyite assertions are two points from the London 1966 IC Conference, from which we were expelled on the transparent organizational pretext that comrade Robertson, a member of the Spartacist delegation, refused to satisfactorily apologize for having missed a session of the Conference without prior permission. But comrade Robertson *did* offer, not a groveling admis-

sion of petty-bourgeois American nationalism, but a genuine apology for genuine ignorance of an alleged, unannounced "rule" (which was of course never applied to other delegates who had missed sessions), thus exposing the Healyites' fraudulent, calculated aim to create a servile U.S. appendage. To make absolutely unambiguous the real character of the Healy "apology" campaign—to which he devoted the main attention of 1½ days of a 4-day international gathering!—we are reprinting below comrade Robertson's complete final statement to the IC Conference:

"Comrades: We believe that it is a violation of Leninist practice to demand that a comrade affirm to his comrades what he does not believe. I have in substance said several times that if I had known of the rule I would certainly have abided by it. I wish to assure the comrades that my action was in no way intended to constitute a violation of the procedures governing the conduct of individuals participating in the Conference. However, this has been deemed not good enough. Instead, in the guise of discipline, the Spartacist organization has been subjected to a series of slanderous attacks, despite our basic political agreement on the necessity of the fight against revisionism. This is an attempt to substitute for international democratic centralism for the American section a mechanism not of consciousness and discipline but of fear and obedience. Hence an incidental violation of significance of an unintentional violation of protocol has been uniquely singled out and inflated into an accusation of petty-bourgeois arrogance and American imperial chauvinism. If the comrades go ahead to exclude us from this Conference, we ask only what we have asked before—study of our documents, including our present draft on U.S. work before you now, and our work over the next months and years. We will do the same, and a unification of the proper Trotskyist forces will be achieved, despite this tragic setback."

And these are the words of a supposed arrogant petty-bourgeois nationalist!

That the Healyites found this statement manifestly unacceptable and excluded the Spartacist delegation from the Conference forthwith shows that they were seeking not a recognition of supposed rules but a cringing demonstration of organizational and political subservience.

The other factual point is that the Conference itself admitted with reference to the relations between the British and French IC groups (the IC's only significant sections) that "the only method of arriving at decisions that remains possible at present is the principle of unanimity." This admission that the IC *does not have* international democratic centralism means that the IC as an organized body is essentially

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*illusory.* Its real nature is a bloc between two national groupings. It is not an International at all, "Fourth" or otherwise!

But the Wohlforthite travesty on internationalism goes even further. The WL prides itself on its loyalty to the Healy leadership. Typical of their cynical attitude toward political questions, the WL tendency has never fought for its political positions even inside the IC. For example, at one point virtually every member of the Wohlforth cadre held a position akin to ours on Cuba—that Cuba is a deformed workers state, not a capitalist state, as Healy asserts—yet they never for an instant opposed Healy on that or any other point. What kind of "internationalist" joyfully embraces a "discipline" which is not mutually binding on all sections, which is not based on democratic centralism, in an "International" where the only proof of internationalism is renunciation in principle and in advance of all political differences? This is the "internationalism" of Lovestone and Browder toward the Stalinized Comintern, not of Trotskyists.

**The Unspeakable  
In Pursuit of the Inedible**

One principal real reason for our expulsion from the 1966 IC Conference was our assertion that the anti-revisionist forces in the Trotskyist movement had not yet done very well in smashing Pabloism organizationally, and that a further process of splits and fusions would have to take place before the political lines would be clear. The IC, however, asserted that the victory over Pabloism had been definitively won and the continuity of the Fourth International on a revolutionary basis assured.

But, four years later, the self-same Healy, representing a badly degenerated IC, has now come to the United Secretariat with a proposal for common political discussion and common work, hopefully to result in a "joint international conference"! What can one say? In the four years the Pabloists in their substance have gone from bad to worse, but the IC (with Wohlforth trailing behind with an article of oh-so-

comradely criticism of the SWP in the 20 July *Bulletin*) proposes unity! What is apparently really happening is—as we insisted in 1966, and before, and after—that some individuals and groupings in the United Secretariat formation have, in the light of events and experience, begun to genuinely move left in opposition to the United Secretariat leadership. And Healy, in a clumsy effort to ingratiate himself with these forces, commits the grossly unprincipled act of authenticating and bolstering the Trotskyist credentials of the whole Pabloist gang—Frank, Mandel, Maitan, Hansen—by a unity maneuver, after years of declaring them already defeated and committing even provocation and violence against their organizations.

Healy will certainly not succeed in his wooden maneuver. But what we have before us is a pristine example of why political differentiation along clear lines has not taken place among alleged Trotskyists over the last 20 years. Anyone who believed Healy's unity protestations would have to conclude that there is indeed a "family of Trotskyism," as centrists have long suggested, and that the questions separating erstwhile Trotskyists into their separate organizations are not decisive. This only deepens the confusion which has served to retard political polarization and the rebirth of a real Fourth International. Thank you, Gerry Healy.

Healy applied the same method to the 1963 fight inside the SWP. Our comrades correctly saw that the party had become a rightward-moving *centrist* organization whose central leadership

was now Pabloist and must be fought from within the party. To Wohlforth, this characterization could mean only one thing: we were in the way and had to be gotten rid of—first from the common faction, then out of the party. For the Healyites could conceive of only two possible courses of action. Either the United Secretariat would reunify with the IC and Wohlforth and his minions would continue to play the role of left cover and party policeman for Dobbs and Co., or the fight would be over and they would split. Healy's recent revealing turn-about toward the Pabloists shows the same false dichotomy: either conciliate the Pabloist leadership or else declare the fight over. Principled struggle is their excluded middle.

**Incompatible**

Faced with such a history, the much-vaunted "Marxist method" that Wohlforth teaches his members is of necessity a profound cynicism which cannot but erode and destroy the backbone of those who start out by seeking revolution and end up following Wohlforth ever deeper into the mire. A cadre which learns to cover up the embarrassing old opportunism while embracing the new, to proclaim "Only the Workers League . . ." in defiance of self-evident realities, to excuse the 180° shifts in line by reference to the frequency of the *Bulletin*, cannot, whatever its intentions, build consciousness and make a revolution. Thus even when the formal political positions of the WL and the SL have closely impinged, as they have at times in the past, the cadres of our two organizations are fundamentally incompatible; we have been educated in two different schools, the one in cynicism, the other in Trotskyism.

The example of the Healy-Wohlforth grouping provides an important lesson. Even the most revolutionary ideas of our epoch—Trotskyism—in the hands of a corrupted counterfeiter like Wohlforth lead straight to an organization like WL. And that is why we are compelled to mercilessly expose, combat and destroy such a trend in the working-class movement. Nothing less than the construction of an authentic revolutionary vanguard in the citadel of imperialism hinges on the outcome. ■

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## PART I: THE PRESENT SITUATION IN THE WORKERS LEAGUE

The Workers League has taken a sharp turn to the right over this fall period in the direction of centrism. Ultra-left demagoguery of the most hollow and absurd kind is being used to cover a completely conservative position of withdrawal from any struggle within the working class. In this way, the work of a decade in building a revolutionary movement in the United States and internationally is being swiftly undone.

This rightward turn is the political expression of the new leadership of the Workers League created through the unprecedented intervention of Comrade Healy to overthrow the old leadership at the August 30 and 31 meetings of the Central Committee of the League. The International Committee as a whole must accept full responsibility for the centrist policies of the Maselis leadership, itself the product of the intervention of the IC in the person of Comrade Healy.

### A. The Boston March Against Racism

Political organizations are tested by actual events within the workers movement. The recent Boston March Against Racism was such a test for all political tendencies. None failed it so completely as the Workers League.

The Workers League now finds itself in a position where it stands objectively with the anti-busing forces. How else could any worker interpret the statement appearing in boldface in Fred Maselis' article in the December 13 Bulletin: "This is a march against the workers of Boston which seeks to place the responsibility for racism on the working class itself."

Under conditions where each day there are sizable demonstrations in Boston of an openly racist nature, stirred up by fascist elements, when Black youth who attend South Boston High School were terrorized only a few days before the anti-racism march, it is a political travesty of no small size to denounce any march in Boston, under any leadership, which brings Black and white youth and workers together in a common stand against this racist offensive.

The demonstration, of course, was initiated by a Democrat, and politically dominated by the Socialist Workers Party which controlled its apparatus. The policies of this SWP-Democratic Party bloc are reactionary and offer no way forward for the mass of Black and white workers in Boston or elsewhere. In this sense, the march was like virtually all the peace marches which had preceded it and upon which it was very much modeled. No political support could be given to the leadership of the march in any form whatsoever. In fact, many of those present gave no such political support. They carried their own banners with their own slogans and even, in several cases, had their own sound truck.

However, the Workers League in the past participated in one form

## THE WORKERS LEAGUE AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE

### A Statement By Fin Loblforth

January 11, 1975

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or another in every single anti-war march and every single anti-war conference. In cases when it became necessary to draw the sharpest line of divergence with the political line of the leadership of the march, we not only marched under our own banner and discipline but had our own rally with our own speakers after the march. The only march we did not march in was the last one where, for tactical reasons, we decided upon a large-scale literature sale involving over 50 people which was very effective.

There was one occasion where an anti-war conference was called in New York City addressed by various labor bureaucrats including CIA-connected Victor Reuther and Democratic Senator Vance Hartke. We not only participated in that conference but actually assisted the SWP marshalls in removing from the hall the Progressive Labor and Spartacist forces who sought to disrupt the conference when Reuther and Hartke spoke. At the same time, we forcefully put forward our own resolution and fought for it bitterly during the conference.

Participation in a demonstration or conference dominated by revisionist policies and with Democrats on the platform or in the leadership of the march is not a matter of principle. What is a matter of principle is to keep one's own banner clear of compromise with the Democrats and to fight under such circumstances for a working class perspective.

But it is not simply a negative matter of what is forbidden. Revolutionary policies are always a matter of doing what must be done under a given set of circumstances. It is activity. In this sense, principles are not fixed entities which one does not violate like virginity. Rather, principles represent the continuous struggle to develop the working class politically under a continuously changing objective situation.

It is precisely the sharpness of the capitalist economic crisis which underlies the emergence of racism in Boston. The pressure of inflation on the one hand and rising unemployment on the other beats down upon both Black and white workers in Boston as elsewhere. It particularly affects the youth and the youth are very much in the forefront of this struggle in Boston on both sides. The fascists seek to reach the unemployed white youth while the militant leadership among the Blacks is among the unemployed Black youth.

A policy against racism must begin with this- the economic crisis underlying racism- and must have answers to this crisis. This is the importance of policies which concretely deal with unemployment- 30% for 40, nationalization- and inflation- escalator clause - seen at all times politically within the framework of a struggle to construct a labor party based on the trade unions. Within this framework, specific proposals for massive aid to education, trade union defense of the Black youth under attack, etc., can be raised.

All this Mazelis states in his article on the Boston March. All this is correct. But all this is meaningless if the question of how such policies are to be brought forward into the workers movement is ignored. To denounce any march against racism as a march against the working class, while at the same time failing to organize any concrete action themselves is the mark of abstract propagandists gone mad.

If, as Mazelis demagogically notes in his article, "hundreds were mobilized in their unions to demand that the Greater Boston Labor Council take action to defend students and workers against the racists," why weren't these hundreds mobilized to intervene in the march fighting against the revisionist leadership? It is not enough simply to issue demands that the trade unions must act and then sit back and do nothing yourself. As Lenin noted in his bitter fight against the economists in What Is To Be Done?: "Calls for action, not in the general, but in the concrete sense of the term can only be made at the place of action; only those who themselves go into action and do so immediately, can sound such calls."

To begin with, to state that an economic crisis underlies racism in no way minimizes the importance of a struggle against racism itself. One cannot- as the Revolutionary Union seeks to do- ignore or step around the racism which the capitalists are stirring up. The working class cannot be united without a head-on confrontation over the difficult problems in working class consciousness, one of which happens to be racism. After all, workers in Boston not only work in factories; they live in South Boston and in Roxbury where they send their children to school.

The political struggle of the working class therefore is not and cannot be confined to the trade unions alone, particularly in America where no mass workers party exists. Struggles within the trade unions, important as they are, that remain within the unions are syndicalist and can go nowhere. A labor party will not simply and directly emerge from out of caucus-type struggles within the unions.

When struggles break out- such as this one over the business question- in the working class communities, issues are raised which are central to the political development of the entire working class. It becomes critical to participate in these struggles, while at the same time building forces within the unions. This is the purpose of demands directed toward the trade unions.

However, political development is more complex than simply raising demands to the unions. At this point, when political movement and demonstrations begin to take place in the communities, the middle class becomes very much involved. Democratic party politicians move in and massive movements of students can become involved, while revisionist elements dominate and flourish. But this cannot be helped. It is part of the political development of the American working class. It cannot be sidestepped through concentration on trade union work alone. It must be confronted. We must be part of such movements and within them fight out the issues around which a mass movement of American workers can be built, while at the same time participating in every trade union struggle.

In the past, the Workers League has understood this. We have always insisted that the struggle against revisionism was a real part of the political preparation of the American working class. We realized that the student movement could not be ignored and that the working class movement could only be built in a struggle against middle class radicalism within such student movements.

Does the new situation in the economic crisis mean that we no longer face these tasks? Can we now safely ignore the revisionists in practice, and the students, while devoting ourselves exclusively to the unions? The Boston March proves quite the opposite. After

several years of decay of any political movement on the college and high school campuses, this march represents a new stirring among students who represented the majority group of the over 12,000 who participated. The march also shows that the revisionists cannot simply be ignored. They maintain a certain strength among these youth and they utilize it in a most reactionary manner. The grip of revisionism cannot be removed from the student movement from a distance, with a few articles in the Bulletin. This must take place in practice.

Another critical point is involved in the issues raised over the Boston March. For some years, the Workers League has insisted on the critical role of a working class youth movement in the building of a mass revolutionary party in the US. We learned this lesson particularly from the experiences of the Socialist Labour League-Workers Revolutionary Party- in England. The experience of the WL over the past few years has proven this position to be absolutely correct. The heart of the growth and development of the League since 1971 has been the development of the Young Socialists. It was only because of the development of the YS that the publication of the Bulletin twice-weekly became possible. Only this created the conditions for the League to change to meet the new objective situation a change which the Mazelis leadership is now determined to reverse.

The working class develops unevenly. The older workers today are willing to struggle within the trade unions where they have strength to do so. These struggles are of the greatest importance and they have a major impact on the class relations and the economic crisis itself. But, at the same time, these older workers are not yet ready to grasp revolutionary politics in any significant number or, as yet, to take any action in the unions for a labor party. They remain very much as syndicalists in their thinking at this point. However, the conditions are already being created for a swift change in this thinking at the next point of the struggle.

With the working class youth, the situation is different. These youth have no future now. It is among these youth that the forces who can grasp the question of revolution immediately are to be found. It is not that these youth can make a revolution now. But they can grasp revolutionary thinking. A revolutionary movement must be built of revolutionary material. These youth represent such material. This is why they must represent the heart of a revolutionary party today. Only a party based primarily among working class youth can be revolutionary in this period and as a revolutionary party fight out all the problems of development within the working class as a whole.

The importance of the Boston March lies precisely in its youthful character involving layers of high school youth for the first time in these broader-type movements. At the same time, the great crime the WL committed in abstaining on December 14- and it was a crime- lies precisely in the fact that the League was the best prepared to mobilize youth forces to participate. In this way, these youth could have been politically educated in the concrete struggle against revisionism.

At the same time, this activity, together with what should have

been continuing activity on the part of the WL branch in the area is of great importance in and of itself in fighting racism. The trade unions will never organize the youth in the neighborhoods. Only revolutionists can do that. But the organization of the youth in the neighborhoods around a working class program is central to fighting the development of fascist forces among these youth. At this stage, work among Black youth is most critical. However, important changes are already developing among white working class youth because of the tremendous rise in unemployment among these youth. The fascists see this and seek to win support among this strata. We can and must begin to penetrate these layers as well as layers of Black youth. This is the role of a mass Young Socialists. Marching on December 14 could have contributed to building such a YS throughout Boston.

It is this which above all makes clear the conservative and abstentionist character of the ultra-left rhetoric of Mazelis. Over the past year, the WL held a number of marches in cities across the nation and in Washington. These marches were highly successful and an important part of the life of the YS movement we had built. Now, for four months, the YS has not held a single march. Mazelis not only condemns the December 14 march but, despite branch work in the Roxbury area for several years, he himself failed to organize a single such march under the banners of the WL and YS.

The December 14 abstention is the culmination and expression of the policies of the Workers League over the past three months. It is what Comrade Mazelis conceives of as a "balanced approach" in which youth work is to be combined with some student work, and a lot of trade union work. Above all, one must never get too tired or certainly sell too many papers. Everything must be in perfect balance.

However, perfect balance is a state of notionlessness. It is always important to carry out party work in an all-sided way. But such work must have a thrust, a central direction, yes, a one-sidedness to it. At the heart of the work of the party this fall should have been the fight to continue to develop and expand the Young Socialist branches, in the neighborhoods, at the high schools and on the campuses. This should have been combined with a battle to build up the circulation of the press and on this basis building political support in the unions.

Instead, the League, particularly on the urging of Mike Bania, has become preoccupied with trade union work. But the trade unions in America, while involved in critically important struggles have not yet become political. Thus, the trade union work was not really "work." It involved little more than reportage in the press and hollow denunciations of the labor bureaucrats. In the meantime, the life of the branches became all the more the life of little circles of middle class people hanging around the unions just as the old IS group used to do before its breakup.

#### B. The Trade Unions And Centrism

At the 1973 Workers League Conference, a tendency was present which openly reflected the resistance of entire layers of the League to the transformation of the old League into an actual workers movement. This tendency was composed of three elements. First was

Irving Hall who submitted an oppositional resolution. Second was Steve Seltzer who supported Hall. Third was Comrade Jacques Gagnon, a man who would later be instrumental in bringing a grouping of former party members together in the summer of 1974. This group played a critical role in establishing the Mazelis leadership. Comrade Jacques had his own resolution but its central thrust was along the same lines as Hall's.

All these tendencies represented a centrist retreat from the construction of a revolutionary youth movement. They covered their centrism by calling for a "turn to the unions." For these people, trade union work became a cover for the perpetuation of a middle class circle of radicals distant from any revolutionary perspectives. At heart, these forces represented an extremely conservative and liquidationist tendency.

They actually reflected a new form of the old economist tendency which Lenin fought in What Is To Be Done? Lenin, in that fight, insisted that the trade unions had to be placed within the framework of the all-sided character of the political struggle of the working class. Trade union consciousness is a form of bourgeois consciousness and the revolutionary party can never be limited to it. It is necessary to struggle continuously against this consciousness as one works within the unions.

Of course this is not simply a negative affair of criticizing the narrowness of the trade union outlook. It requires that a revolutionary party- starting from revolutionary perspectives- fight on all the political issues that effect the lives of workers. The struggles within the trade unions must thus be placed within this context.

The meaning of this is even more clear in light of the recent developments in Boston. A revolutionary party cannot be built by seeking to sidestep the issue of racism posed in Boston. It cannot simply plough ahead with this or that proposal for trade union policy. This will be as effective in Boston and other American cities as it would in Northern Ireland. One can have a policy for trade union action in the shipyards of Belfast but if one has no policy on the question of the unification of Ireland which is fought out openly among Protestant workers then one has no revolutionary policy at all.

Racism is not an accidental feature of the United States. It is rooted in its 300 year history, as we have explained in our book, The History Of The American Working Class. There is no way forward to the American revolution without fighting, in the new context of the modern capitalist crisis, the question posed in the great American Civil War. To view the events in Boston as some sort of aberration to be played down rather than as a central feature of the struggle we must wage against bourgeois thinking in the working class is an economist error of the worst sort. Its conclusions are completely centrist in practice.

Only to the extent that an all-sided fight around all the political issues confronting the working class is honestly waged can a revolutionary cadre be assembled. Only on this basis can more and more

trade unionists become part of that revolutionary cadre. To see the struggle as a matter primarily of the construction of trade union caucuses is to liquidate the party itself, subordinating it to a form of organization within the limits of bourgeois consciousness. This is why the caucus building school of "revolutionary" politics is always accompanied by a decay in the building of the party.

When perspectives are posed in this way, the question of why a cadre recruited from the working class youth is so critical becomes even clearer. Only with such a cadre can we begin to transform trade unionists as well as middle class students and intellectuals into party people.

This is the general approach we took to this question during the summer of 1973, at the 1973 conference, and in the year which followed. Comrade Healy participated in these discussions insisting particularly on the importance of classes for workers. He insisted that we first fight for such classes and not simply for caucuses based on trade union policies alone.

Therefore, it was no accident that in the summer of 1973, when we launched an all-out struggle among the older party cadre to drive the party into the working class, that our sharpest conflict came over the old forms of our trade union work. This was most true with our caucus in the Social Service Employees Union. The work within the SSEU was begun by Comrade Sebastian as early as 1965. Comrades Dennis O'Casey and Leuy St. John were recruited out of that work. At various times, that work received wide support within the SSEU, where the caucus almost gained a majority for various proposals.

However, the SSEU work had never been real party building work. Few came out of the SSEU into the movement. Those who did join were middle class radicals who happened to be members of the SSEU. The SSEU caucus was particularly distant from the working class minority workers who, by 1973, made up the bulk of the SSEU members. It is not accidental that in the course of the year which followed, the entire SSEU caucus one by one left the movement, collapsing before the tasks of building a youth movement and of reaching the workers in the SSEU. This included Alex Steiner, Dennis O'Casey, Ronnie R., Karen Frankel, Neal F., and others.

The 1973 conference counterposed the revolutionary perspectives, which had been hammered out over the preceding year and were incorporated in the "Perspectives For The American Revolution" document, against this economist and centrist position of Hall, Seltzer and Gagnon. In the end, these three comrades withdrew their documents and voted with the majority. Comrade Gerry Healy supported this position down the line speaking from the floor of the conference on it himself.

The Workers League of today has gone over completely to the positions of Hall-Seltzer-Gagnon. The group of comrades who recently rejoined the movement were all associated with that general outlook when they were formerly in the party. They were organized by Gagnon, a leading proponent of that position in 1973. The result has been a paper more and more divorced from theory, limited to abstract propaganda about this or that trade union struggle, a youth movement in decay, a declining circulation of the press and finally the abstentionist line toward the Boston March. The record is clear. Comrade

Gerry Healy has engineered a complete reversal in the political positions of the League. He has backed a centrist overthrow of revolutionary perspectives fought for over a decade.

C. LESSONS OF THE MINERS STRIKE

The centrist character of the Hazelis leadership is expressed sharply in the Workers League's recent intervention in the miners strike. The coverage of the miners strike has been characterized by an abstract ultra-leftism which has functioned as a very thin cover for a purely syndicalist perspective. The latter has led, as it always does, to opportunism in practice.

First, it must be understood that trade union perspectives do not begin in the trade unions. They are an expression of party perspectives. Under conditions in which a party has no real perspective, then trade union work can only be trade union work. As such it remains within the limits of bourgeois consciousness and is in no sense revolutionary. This is why it is critical to understand the recent miners struggles as part of the struggle to construct the party, to train Marxist cadres and not as a thing-in-itself to intervene in.

The very nature of mining in the United States places a great limit upon our ability to intervene in a party way. The mines are located in a culturally backward part of the country distant from any cities. At this stage in the development of the American working class it is not possible to build significant party branches in the small towns of the rural mining areas. An intervention in the miners union then is primarily for the understanding and training of workers elsewhere, for the construction of branches in cities like Cleveland, Pittsburgh and Youngstown.

At the same time, this background in no way lessens the militancy of the miners. Quite the opposite. The existence of whole towns made up almost entirely of miners isolated from the rest of the country has contributed to their solidarity. It, however, has also contributed to syndicalist traditions among miners—a tremendous union consciousness on the one hand and a fantastic political and cultural backwardness on the other.

What is necessary in order to develop a strategy of intervention in the recent miners strike is to understand this strike in its historical perspective. It no point in the recent coverage of the strike by the Muller was this done.

The present Miller leadership is the product of a highly contradictory development in the trade unions, a development by no means exclusive to the miners, but for the reasons stated above, takes on a sharp expression among the miners. Miller led a massive movement of rank and file miners against the corrupt Boyle leadership. Miller did this in an opportunist way leaning dangerously upon the federal government in his campaign against Boyle. He encouraged government intervention in the life of the UMW and in that way weakened the union movement. But at the same time, this movement was more than Miller and the bourgeois government. It was an elemental movement of masses of workers such as will take place in the next period in a number of unions.

Miller sought to limit his struggle to the question of "democracy"

in the unions. The ranks viewed things differently. For them democracy was necessary to gain control of the union in order to utilize the union as a weapon of struggle against the employer. So, while Miller did his best to avoid the real issues facing the union, these issues were raised soon after Miller came to power and have been at the center of the recent strike.

The Workers League correctly gave critical support to Miller against Boyle. We based this support on Trotsky's understanding of the importance of supporting any group within the union which will loosen the hold of the bureaucracy upon the ranks, which will open up the situation for our own development in the unions. At the same time, it was necessary to place Miller in power in order to create conditions for the breaking of Miller's own supporters from Miller.

This position of the Workers League is never mentioned by David North in his extensive writings on the miners strike.

In any event it is impossible to intervene in the present situation in the miners union unless one has a proper understanding and policy towards the past of the union which created the present. The question could not be clearer. The tremendous opportunities which existed during this past period for rank and file struggle against the Miller leadership were possible only because the Miller group defeated the old Boyle machine. Thus history has proven us completely correct in our support to Miller over Boyle. The tremendous outbreak of opposition to Miller and his contract proves the correctness of the critical character of the support we gave Miller against Boyle. We supported Miller only to create the conditions to fight him. Anyone who does not understand such a position does not understand dialectics.

The difficulty with the position of North and the Hazelis leadership is that, since they do not begin from this perspective, they open themselves up to an opportunist relationship with precisely the remnants of the old Boyle regime which still have considerable strength in the union. What North does is simply denounce Miller in as extreme terms as he can. Then he discusses the need for the labor party in a most abstract manner. When it comes to concrete policies he supports without criticism any and all forces within the union who oppose the contract. He even defends these forces from the criticisms of the revisionists. His concrete policy within the UMW gets no further than a no vote on the contract.

It is not simply a matter of the rank and file miner who opposes the contract. North was able to get close to members of the negotiating committee—largely union officials—who opposed the contract. In this fashion—very much like his interviews in 1972 with Abel—North is giving a form of very uncritical support to the old Boyle regime in the union. Talk of a labor party is only a cover for such crass opportunism in practice.

It is precisely the political backwardness of American—most extremely expressed in the culturally backward mining districts where men also strike against "ungodly" books in the schools—which makes it so easy for demagogic forces to maneuver within the unions disguising themselves as militants. Union policy alone is insufficient to flush them out. What was needed was to assess the contradictory development of the Miller group over the past few years. It was

necessary to expose its relations with the government and thus, its inability to offer a real alternative to the Boyle forces.

Within this framework, a section of workers could be fought for who began to grasp the need for a Marxist force in the unions, training themselves as part of the revolutionary party and fighting for a labor party in their union. The orientation should have been toward the forces around Miller. A ruthless exposure should have been conducted against all the remnants of the old Boyle machine who sought to hide behind opposition to the contract. It was not simply a matter of defeating the contract but of educating even a small layer of workers in the course of the struggle against the contract.

This important intervention in the miners strike had to be subordinated to the general party tasks of this period. These, as we have stated, must center on the construction of a youth movement and, with this movement, building the party press and party branches in the central industrial cities of the country. While North was running around the mining areas, the branches in the relatively nearby areas of Youngstown and Cleveland were allowed to decay. No attempt was made to rebuild in Pittsburgh where we made a good beginning on a branch last year but were unable to maintain that work. Coverage of the mines became a cover for the actual liquidation of the party, a cover for the lack of struggle within the party and by the party over anything. It was a journalistic snowjob to cover up for a party running away from its historic tasks.

#### D. What The Recent YS Conference Reveals

This essentially centrist approach had to lead to liquidationism. The paper has been the first to suffer. The circulation of the paper has now fallen so low- at one time it reached over 20,000 per issue twice a week- that the party will no longer publish circulation reports in the press. Sub campaigns have been abandoned. Centralized trailblazers, which built such important new branches in Cleveland and Youngstown last year, have been abandoned.

The next area where this liquidationism has been revealed is in the public activities of the League. The Tenth Anniversary meeting of the Bulletin was a flop. That is the only objective judgement that can be made of it. Last year, the founding meeting of the twice-weekly was attended by over 400 people. This year, less than 200 came to the Tenth Anniversary meeting.

Now, public meetings in the name of the Workers League have been largely abandoned in favor of meetings of the Trade Union Alliance for a Labor Party. When, a number of years ago, we did the same thing with the Trade Unionists for a Labor Party, we were roundly denounced by the British for liquidationism. Their criticism was quite correct in my opinion.

The third area where this liquidationism has been most sharply revealed has been in the disintegration of the Young Socialist movement. The YS paper reflects no real activity among the youth. Each issue begins with the same abstractions and no concrete policies or actions are posed to youth. No demonstrations have been held.

While throughout the entire fall period, there have been real

movements within the high schools and on the campuses brought about by the cutbacks, the YS paper has refused to take up a concrete campaign around these issues. Instead, each issue has been headed with some general abstraction from the September issue, with its head "The Crisis Affects You," to the December issue demanding "Youth Must Fight For Socialist Policies." Such heads are perhaps alright in a period when all one can do is work of a propaganda character because of the lack of any specific struggles in the schools or on the campuses.

However, that certainly has not been the nature of the fall period. As a result of their abstention from the real struggles of the youth, not only in Boston but in the school crisis on the Lower East Side and in other cities, the YS has allowed the revisionist YSA to take the lead in these struggles.

At the same time that the actual agitational and campaigning nature of the YS has been destroyed so too has its theoretical side. Throughout the 1973-1974 period, the YS contained a two-page centerfold, first on the "Heroes of the American Labor Movement," then a series on Lenin's "What Is To Be Done?", all original material not reprints from the Workers Press, aimed at the theoretical development of the YS members. In the fall period, no series has been run whatsoever; no original material has been written; finally, in a factional maneuver, the YS refused to print part four of the history of the early student movement in the US written by Tim Wohlforth.

The recent Eastern Regional Conference of the Young Socialists is final proof of the collapse of the Workers League under the centrist leadership of Mazelis. This conference was organized from the beginning without any serious fight or perspectives. The Bulletin did not even carry ads for the conference except in the Spanish Section. It was seen as one activity among many while the main concern of the League centered on North's trips to the mines and to the hotel rooms of Washington, D.C.

The conference was not prepared through any struggle in the whole preceding period. Not a single demonstration or other activity of any significance had been conducted by the Young Socialists. Two weeks before the conference, when I met with Comrades Mazelis and Hayward seeking to rejoin the party, I proposed that the Young Socialists mobilize a sizable contingent to the Boston Anti-Fascism March. This would have been an important way to build the regional conference--to show in practice the politics of the YS as against the revisionists. But of course Mazelis decided on the course of complete abstentionism. A youth movement cannot be built through abstentionism. This conference certainly proved that.

The conference itself expressed the great changes in the League since the first regional conference on December 15, 1973. That conference was attended by over 350 youth, while this conference was attended, according to the Bulletin, by only 150 youth. Why is this conference, one year later, less than half the size of the earlier conference and perhaps only one third the size? Is it because the objective conditions are no longer favorable for building a youth movement? Clearly they are more favorable today than last year.

Could it be because key comrades needed to build the conference were "driven out" of the party in the interim? But the party had built a summer camp stronger than a year ago only in August and since then a group of comrades who had left the party have returned. Could it be the price the party is paying for the "mistakes" of the old Wohlforth leadership? Certainly, with almost four months having passed since I was removed as National Secretary, the new leadership can no longer blame the old leadership for their own failure to build a movement!

The YS conference illustrates the virtually complete liquidation of the Young Socialists under the Mazelis leadership. This is part of the general liquidation of the party. It can no longer be hidden. The conference is a product of the policies of Mazelis supported by Gerry Realy and Mike Banda. It proves once again that centrists cannot reach the youth.

Obviously, Mazelis has been forced to make an empirical recognition of this. The conference was called as a regional conference around the YS paper—which is precisely how we originally conceived our first regional conference. But it is reported as "the first annual conference of the Young Socialist newspaper." Not only is this statement a lie but it suggests that Mazelis has abandoned the notion of holding other regional conferences. Last year we built a conference the size of this year's New York conference in the new area of Cleveland-Corvath-Pittsburgh-Dayton-Detroit and well as holding conferences in Madison, San Francisco and Los Angeles. What if anything could be built there now? Why is it that not a single report has appeared in the Bulletin on Comrade Mazelis' recent tour? Does Mazelis even plan a national YS conference? Last year after the loss of the people who recently returned to the party, we built a conference of 550 youth!

It is not simply a matter of the failure to bring numbers to the conference. This failure in turn is the result of a turn away from revolutionary perspectives in the League. The speeches at the conference, as reported in the Bulletin, are an abomination. They are textbook examples of abstract and hollow thinking at its worst. Comrade Sinclair has been speaking this way for years. But it is Comrade Mazelis' speech which takes the cake. He informs us that capitalism is at the end of its rope and that the productive forces and productive relations are in an absolute conflict. And no stops there! He makes no concrete assessment of the actual unfolding of the crisis nor does he put forward any policies for constructing a movement under such conditions.

The productive forces are in an absolute conflict with the productive relations in only the general sense that capitalism as an international system is not longer growing. Production, however, continues. The question is to assess how it continues, what will happen in the next stage of the crisis, and what politically flows from the way the capitalists seek to continue under these conditions, and how the working class seeks to resist the attacks upon it. Without such a concrete assessment, we have only the old theory of imminent collapse of capital which the Lambert group borrowed from Pablo.

The conference is dominated by such generalities. The discussion at the conference proceeds on the lowest level—much like our first conference in December 1971. The discussion centers on this or that

attack on working conditions. There is clearly no theoretical conflict such as the one which marked the regional conference the preceding year with the dispute over racism and nationalism or the national YS conference with the sharp battle over individualism.

This conference was held one week after the Boston March and in the midst of the final stage of the miners struggle. According to the report in the Bulletin, the Boston March was not even mentioned. Comrade Mazelis decides that 12,000 people were marching against the working class and he does not even consider this an issue worth discussing at a youth conference. No detailed discussion of the miners struggle took place either. It is as if a youth movement can be built by avoiding a concrete conflict over the actual problems of the workers movement.

The conference begins abstractly with the universal. It then proceeds to the concrete as isolated events and facts. How else could it proceed from such a beginning? Then, it concludes back on the level of the abstract. Nothing, absolutely nothing emerges from the conference for the YS to do in the next period. Oh, pardon me, Comrade Halyard did propose a "demonstration" in February. Now, this YS pragmatism gone wild. Sensing that the youth at the meeting—those few who did come—wanted to do something about the conditions they faced, Halyard proposed "a demonstration." We are not told what the demonstration is to center on, what programmatic demands it would raise, what its purpose was, and how this fits into our tasks of building a revolutionary leadership in the working class.

What a contrast to the 1973 conference. This conference was campaigned for from the moment of the conclusion of the October 4 meeting which launched the twice-weekly. We built it at the same time that we launched trailblazers into the Midwest to build the party in new areas and expand the circulation of the twice-weekly. We held talent shows and bazaars and other events during the course of building for the conference.

The first conference began with a perspectives report on the international crisis by Adele Sinclair. Of course, there were difficulties with the report because of its highly abstract character. But the report concluded with a proposal of how the YS would act under the new stage in the crisis. It described what it would do and why it would do it. We sought at this, and at the other regional conferences, to explain the relationship between our own activity and the preparation of the working class for the tasks ahead. Nothing was left in a vague and general form. Each activity planned was explained theoretically and on this basis, a struggle took place for youth to grasp Marxist philosophy, that is, to grasp the Marxist theory of knowledge, to understand how consciousness would change and in this way how the working class would become prepared for the tasks it faced.

Within this framework, a struggle took place among the youth over nationalism and racism with youth themselves fighting for our Marxist perspectives. At the end of the conference, a highly successful dance was held with a well-known band.

We will quote from my speech given in the middle of the conference to illustrate the approach taken:

"The Young Socialists will be built by bringing together two things: one: the millions of workers who will begin to change their thinking because of what they personally experience as the capitalist crisis affects everybody. A change in the material world, that is, a crisis in the system drives people down, changes people's thinking.

"Two: while it will change people's thinking, it will not automatically reveal to the masses the cause of the problem or the solution. This understanding must be brought in from the outside. The outside is the worker who is a socialist, the YS member, and the party person.

"These people are part of the working class but different from the working class. They conflict with the thinking of the working class.

"That is why we are launching a regional, and soon a national campaign for jobs. It will be a fight of the youth that can change the thinking of older workers and build a conscious movement in the unions to replace the present union bureaucrats.

"Ask yourself a question: has or has not your thinking changed in the last six months? Would you have come to this conference a year ago?

"Or did you experience things that helped to make you change your thinking? But you did not think of socialism yourself. That came from the fight of the YS to reach you.

"Well, if we can reach you, then you can reach others. That's what our campaign is about.

"It is the initial fight of youth that will lead workers. We turn not to Nixon, not to the Democrats, but to the 20 million workers in the unions."

#### E. The Struggle For Marxist Theory In The WL

It is important to clarify several related questions of philosophy and Marxist theory. The philosophical expression of centrism is the attempt to deny contradiction as the heart of all development and change. The centrist is a formal thinker. He refuses to bring the opposites together in his thinking so that his thinking will reflect the actual struggle of opposing forces in the material world. In this way, he seeks to avoid the conflicts existent in the world. Instead, he wishes to proceed in a gradual non-contradictory way. He is wrapped up in "transitions" which for him represents in between states of compromise.

This came out clearly in the philosophical conflict with George Novack. Novack saw the moments of dialectics in a fashion which wiped out any real contradiction or struggle. He saw the negation of the negation as a process of retaining in the new being elements of the old being which survive unscathed from the original or first negation. However, a study of Lenin's Philosophical Notebooks and Hegel's Logic reveals that both Lenin and Hegel hold that the old finds its expression in the new through negation not in spite of it. The struggle of opposites is absolute and the unity of opposites only relative. In fact, this unity is achieved only through the struggle of opposites.

The importance of this struggle of opposites to the development of the Workers League should be clear. The opposites within the League have a long history to them. However, it was in the struggle to turn the party outward during the past year—to break up the old circle propagandism of the past—that the opposites were most sharply revealed. As we noted in the resolution Perspectives For The American Revolution:

"This circle approach is expressed in two complimentary ways. First is abstract propagandism. The propagandist starts from abstractions which are fixed, formal and dead. He deals with what is new only for the purpose of adjusting and readjusting his abstractions. Practice is for the self-development of the idea, of the abstraction. With this method he is continuously blind to what is new, unable to develop anyone around him, subjective and hostile to the actual development of a party of workers.

"Second is the activist. He rejects theory altogether operating only at the level of the current thinking of the workers around him. His practice is without contradiction, without conflict with previously developed theory.

"The turn into the working class is a theoretical task. It is actually a turn into the conflict of classes in the material world. But knowledge does not develop as a simple reflection of the working class. If this were true then a party would not be necessary. It is developed only consciously through a process of conflict of the new experiences with previously developed theory as we fight as part of the working class to construct a conscious leadership."

We have been accused in the recent period of seeking to choose opposites arbitrarily and refusing to hold the opposites fast. There have, of course, been times when we have been guilty of both practices. But there is nothing arbitrary about the choice of opposites which emerged over the past year in the WL. While occasionally an individual can and did make a change—which was true for a brief period with Comrade St. John—the opposites remained and have been determined by a considerable history.

The turn back to abstract propagandism and centrism, brought about by Comrade Healy's arbitrary intervention to remove an opposite from the WL, is a confirmation that the opposites described in this statement existed historically within the League. They were in no sense arbitrarily determined by me.

The question of holding opposites fast deserves some explanation for this term has become the philosophical cover in the Workers League for compromise with centrists. Comrade Maselis has developed the art of holding opposites fast to the point where he is able to keep them in perfect balance, thus creating a state of notionlessness. Certainly a state of notionlessness is the best way to characterize the "activity" of the League since Labor Day. But the material world is made up of matter in motion. The inability of the leadership of the League to reflect this in their thinking

and on this basis develop a practice first creates the conditions for the isolation of the League. Never before has the League stood so isolated. Secondly, it creates the conditions where in the next period, the League itself will be torn apart by the contra-

dictory forces it does not grasp consciously.

Opposites are held fast precisely through bringing them together. That is why opposites are held fast only through struggle and in no other way. Any attempt to avoid struggle creates the conditions for the breaking up of the opposites. This is because the struggle of opposites proceeds in any event. If it is not approached consciously and fought out by comrades who fight as an opposite against another opposite then the opposites fall away and no knowledge is learned from their conflict.

What this means is that precisely the struggle we waged with the Lucy St. John's and the Dennis O'Casey's provided the knowledge necessary for the development of the League. We held these comrades through our struggle with them. We were able to carry out a change in the League in the building of the youth movement through what we learned in the process of this struggle.

Where we erred, and we did err, in relation to this strata was when we let up on this internal struggle while persisting in the work in the working class which they resisted. The record showed that little struggle took place with Lucy St. John for several months prior to her leaving the League. Furthermore, she left one day after one of our greatest successes, the December 15 Eastern Regional YS Conference. We also erred by not waging a more persistent struggle against the active layer of the party, the Perry Ivarsons, Esther Galens, Lucia Riveras, Helen Kalyands. Our weakness was not any tendency toward arbitrary struggle, driving out well-meaning comrades. Rather, it was at times to avoid the internal struggle, thus making it difficult to educate the new layers brought into the party as well as the critical activist layer of the party.

However, another philosophical position has now emerged within the Workers League. It begins with Comrade Healy's lectures at the Summer Camp. He sought to break down the moments of the dialectic in the most minute way showing the opposites within each opposite at each moment in the dialectic process. This kind of lecture has, in my opinion very little use, because it abstracts out of an actual study of matter in motion a discussion of logic in such a manner as to encourage a very pedantic and formal approach.

His main emphasis was on transitions. But a transition cannot be understood when abstracted from what happened before (the affirmative or first moment of the dialectic) and what will come after it (the negation of negation which, in turn, is a first moment in the next dialectical change). It is as absurd to do this as it is to assess the miner's strike isolated from the Miller-Boyle fight which preceded it. The interpenetration of opposites is precisely that and it cannot be understood abstracted from the whole process.

This emphasis on transitions can become a concession to centrist metaphysics which envisions fixed entities which survive the process of contradiction and provide transition and continuity to the processes of matter and life. But as we have discussed no such survivors exist. Transition is this process of oppositional struggle itself. The past shapes the future through the present precisely in this negative way. The future is not the negation of any past but of a particular past. It is none-the-less a break, an irreversible break with that past.

This question of transition, combined with the question of holding opposites fast, became a philosophical rationale for maintaining unprincipled blocs with centrist elements who had left the party. These elements, as we have proven, were returned to the party on the basis of a political compromise with their centrist position, not on a clear basis in which the whole movement could learn from a continuing struggle against their centrism.

At the same time, another philosophical "innovation" was introduced into the Workers League. It was in fact nothing more than an old rationale for propagandism. It seems we must begin with the universal which after all is contained in the first moment of dialectics. As I pointed out in a philosophy class before my resignation the universal is contained within the first moment of the process as an opposing of the particular (of course, when I raised this point, I was denounced and accused of factionalism).

We begin at every point from a concrete, from a particular. The dialectical process can never begin from a universal. That is the way our thinking is trained to operate in the universities. It is not the way change takes place in matter nor even in our everyday thinking if we think consciously about it. To begin with the universal is an idealist mental imposition upon the actual processes of the material world.

The importance of this should be clear. For some years now we have battled with comrades to understand that they must begin at each point in their thinking with what is part, with concrete experiences in the workers movement. They must seek to bring these experiences into conflict with their already developed thought (the universal, Marxist theory and strategy as we know it to that point in time). Out of this conflict will come a new development in thinking. But it is not a matter of colliding an experience observed with a thought held. It is more than a mental process--more exactly it is a conscious mental process--because it involves our struggle, our action, in the material world--our struggle to construct a party within the working class.

The effect of this propagandist practice of beginning with the universal is expressed in the party press. Issue after issue of the Bulletin begins with some very generalized statement on the crisis or the most abstract of calls for a labor party. There is no strategy which will lead to agitation on concrete issues which effect the life of the working class. No campaigns against unemployment, over inflation. Just abstract discussions of capitalism in "absolute" decline. Everything is the universal. Everything is therefore millions of light years away from the working class.

The methods described in this section have been the methods of Comrade Kazzelis for years. For years we fought Comrade Kazzelis on these questions. Comrade Healy has intervened into the internal life of the Workers League to cut off this process. By placing Comrade Kazzelis at the head of the movement and giving him the backing of the PC, Comrade Healy has removed any possibility of a struggle against this. Thus the idealist tendency which always existed within the League now reigns unchallenged.

The effects of this on the theoretical life of the Workers League

can no longer be denied. In August we were accused by Comrade Healy of neglecting theory in our quest to build the Workers League. I do not believe this was the case because I am convinced that theory could not develop in the League outside of the turn we took in 1973 to drive the movement into the youth. But I certainly agree that as that drive proceeded we needed to continuously develop the movement theoretically.

The removal of our leadership in the League by Comrade Healy has led to a tremendous decline in the theoretical level of the party. This cannot be denied. There is simply no theoretical work going on. The two page spreads have been almost completely abandoned except for reprints from the Workers Press and an occasional journalistic piece. Few classes are held. No educational conferences have taken place. Comrade Mazelis himself has written only three articles in the Bulletin over this period--less than one a month. But theory cannot develop in a vacuum. Without a struggle in the party and in the working class, there can be no theoretical life. The Mazelis leadership does everything to avoid both.

Not only has theory declined under the Mazelis leadership, but this leadership, in league with the British, is suppressing the previous theoretical development of the party. Over the past year, we wrote an important book on the history of the American working class. We felt then, and do even more so now, that with the development of the crisis creating new conditions for working class struggle, we can only equip ourselves to lead the struggle if we assess and understand the past of the American working class.

Over that whole year the book was published, a section at a time, in the Bulletin. Not one person in our movement or internationally expressed any difference with it. Now with the book already printed and ready for distribution, Comrade Mazelis has decided to suppress the book by refusing to advertise it or distribute it publically. When asked about this, all he would say was that Comrade Banda had some criticisms of it, that there had been no discussion of these criticisms within the party, but in the interim the book was being withdrawn from circulation.

Also written during the past year was an important pamphlet called "What Is To Be Done Today." This originally appeared in the Young Socialist. It details Lenin's struggle against the Mensheviks in 1903 and brings out its importance for our struggle to construct the revolutionary party today. That pamphlet was in its last stages of its production just before I resigned. It has not appeared.

Nothing, of course, is being written to take the place of this material. Over the past period, because we had a vision of the kind of movement we could build in this period, we fought to accumulate the equipment which made it possible not only to print our own paper and eventually produce a daily paper (a project no longer mentioned in the Workers League) but to publish books. More than equipment is needed to produce books. Most important is a perspective which sees the need for such material and a struggle of opposites which creates the conditions for theoretical development to take place. Mazelis now has the equipment. He lacks the theory.

PART II: THE WORKERS LEAGUE AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE

A. The History Of The Struggle Against Centrism In The Workers League

All movements develop through a contradictory internal struggle of opposites. This struggle is essentially a reflection of the class struggle itself. The struggle is shaped very much by the objective conditions under which the movement is being built.

The Workers League was built under generally difficult conditions for a revolutionary organization determined to fight in a principled manner. Only a tiny handful of the WL members went through the experiences of the internal struggle within the SWP. The members of the League were in part shaped by and the product of the revival of the student protest movement of the 1960s.

The Workers League did not recruit from those who led the protest struggles. Our movement was small and its insistence on theory fell largely on deaf ears in that period. It was not yet our time to develop. Like Trotsky's movement in the 1950s, we recruited from the critics of what was happening. This is not necessarily the most revolutionary material. In fact, it is largely nonrevolutionary and centrist. But we do not determine the objective circumstances of our development and must do our best with the human material at hand.

It is to the credit of all members of the Workers League that we did as well as we did in that period and in surviving into the 1970s. What distinguished the WL from the Spartacist League was not so much the character of the human material in the two organizations but our struggle as part of the International Committee to be more than critics, more than radicals. This is why we built up the press that we did build up.

Beginning in the fall of 1971, the WL took a sharp turn into the building of a youth movement among working class youth. That drive to construct a youth movement has been at the heart of the League--and its internal difficulties--ever since. The turn into the youth was met by great resistance from a cadre content to content on events, sell some papers, carry out some union caucus work, and perhaps carry out an argument with some other political tendency on a campus.

We were struggling to carry out a change of a qualitative character in the very life of the League. The construction of such a youth movement would be a major step toward the preparation of the WL to become a serious revolutionary force among workers in the next period. This was the case not simply because we needed the youth to reach workers, but because we needed a revolutionary cadre rooted in there youth and composed of comrades--from the middle class and working class--who were turned into these youth and could work among them. It is to the great credit of Comrade Gerry Healy that he urged this course upon us and supported us in it.

However, the interventions of the SWP-WRP leadership in the Workers League has had an increasingly irradic character to it particularly since the beginning of 1973. It was at that time that

The WL held a critically important National Committee Plenum attended by Comrade Healy. The main thrust of Comrade Healy's intervention at that Plenum was to fight for an understanding that the center of the world capitalist crisis was the crisis of American capitalism. If this was grasped, then we could understand the explosive nature of class relations which would develop in the United States simultaneously with revolutionary outbursts in Europe. Only with such a perspective could we grasp how a labor party in America will develop under explosive revolutionary conditions internationally and under conditions within the US which required the development of a mass revolutionary party. Comrade Healy stressed the importance of seeing a labor party in this revolutionary context with workers defense committee, Councils of Action type organizations, being formed in the neighborhoods. This was counterposed to any centrist tendency to see the labor party as an extended stage of social democratic reformism.

Recent events have proven the correctness of this approach. The Boston events themselves show the sharpness of class relations in America, the dangers if we do not organize in the neighborhoods against right-wing elements. At the same time, the decay of the American economy is today central to the world capitalist recession. It is predicted that the US may lead the world in its rate of economic decline over the next year. The US declines from a position of greater strength than any other capitalist nation and thus will be able to bring down European capital in the process of its own decline. The tempo of developments here will not be exactly the same as in Europe but it will nevertheless be highly explosive simultaneously with revolutionary upsurges in Europe and in the underdeveloped nations.

It was following this important intervention by Comrade Healy that the first draft of the resolution "Perspectives for The American Revolution" was written by myself. A copy of the draft was sent to England. This evoked the second intervention of the British comrades in 1973, a letter from Comrade Mike Banda.

The Banda letter proceeded in the exact opposite direction from the original intervention by Comrade Healy. The central thrust of the Banda letter was to insist on the primacy of the European Revolution- particularly in England- while holding that American workers would pass through a relatively long stage of slow development, learning from the developments in Europe. He attacked those sections of the first resolution which made any mention of workers defense committees or councils of action as an adaptation to the British. In fact, the Banda letter left little room for any revolutionary perspective in America. This was consistent with the general approach Banda has taken on American questions for a number of years. While he has been very impressed with the achievements of Ho Chi Minh and Mao Tse Tung in Vietnam and China, and sympathetic to guerrilla warfare efforts elsewhere, he has held the opposite opinion of revolutionary movements among the American working class.

Following the receipt of the Banda letter, a trip to England was made by three comrades for other purposes: Alex Steiner to discuss philosophy and Helen Halvard and Agale Sinclair to attend the British IS Conference. The British comrades immediately sought to line up these comrades against the rest of the party leadership over the issues in the Banda letter. Comrade Healy took the lead in this action.

He was now convinced that the leadership was dominated by American pragmatism and was failing to sufficiently appreciate developments in Europe, particularly in England.

Comrade Steiner in particular came back with a clear reformist political position. He saw little revolutionary potential in America for perhaps decades. He saw an entire stage of American history dominated by a social democratic party. He opposed any discussion of non-parliamentary forms of struggle such as defense committees and councils of action. In fact, what he was really proposing was nothing more than the theory of the parliamentary road to socialism. It was, in essence, the old Lovestone theory of American exceptionalism. He based his theories on Banda's letter and discussions with Comrade Healy in England. Steiner, of course, no doubt exaggerated the British intervention for his own conservative purposes.

It should be recalled that the major theme of the discussion which had taken place at the 1972 summer camp in England had been warnings against any tendency towards adaptation in the British. However the actual experiences in the discussion in the League in early 1973 shows that while the British movement had great authority within the American movement the American movement in those days also thought for itself seeking to learn from the experiences it was beginning to have in the beginning stages of the youth movement.

We sharply opposed the Steiner position though trying as best we could to straddle the contradictory positions put forward by Healy in January and Banda in March. However, the final document will testify that we refused to bow to the Banda position. That document placed the Workers League solidly on the basis of a revolutionary perspective which begins with an understanding that American capitalism is the center of the world capitalist crisis, the American working class will develop politically in an explosive fashion in the next period, as revolution breaks out elsewhere. Such a perspective begins first of all with the construction of the revolutionary party itself!

This discussion with Steiner was of the greatest importance as the most open expression of centrism within the leading circles of the party. At the same time it expressed the contradictory and inconsistent character of the political interventions of the British movement which at one moment contributed greatly to the development of the League only at the next moment to introduce factional and confusing elements which would have completely derailed a less experienced leadership.

The next step in the process came in late June. The Workers League had proceeded in the Spring of 1973 to develop its work among working class youth. However, at the same time we turned back towards the sick old radicals in the form of a series of classes which we opened up to the Spartacist group. The classes in themselves on the 20 year history of the IC--were very important and useful to the movement. However to become engaged in a debate with Spartacist over these matters represented a resistance, a hesitation over a full turn into the working class.

In late June the British comrades called me over for consultations. They were particularly upset by a reference in one of the classes which suggested that the relations between the British and French movements had been one of compromise. While certainly a sentence in the reports

by Comrade Dave North of the class could be so misinterpreted anyone who attended the class was well aware that we defended the relations with the French as a completely principled and necessary stage in the development of the Fourth International. In fact I still hold to that position.

The British intervention, however, took on an extreme character. Every even potential difference was magnified to an absurd degree. I was even attacked as being an American pragmatist for purchasing an American rather than a British web offset press! As the week progressed the hyperbola progressed. By the end of the week's visit the British comrades--more exactly Comrade Healy--threatened to break a 12 year political relationship with the League over this single sentence.

The night before I was to fly back the discussion--actually a one way shouting match--went on until 2:30 a.m. I was sent to bed with all political relations broken. A public statement was to appear in the Workers Press. When at 5:30 a.m. I was awakened for one last meeting with Comrade Healy at which I was told I would be given one last chance. I was to fight for the very life of the League against centrism within it. All the work of the past period was now in jeopardy. (Considering the events which were to take place the next year this was certainly no exaggeration.) Particularly I had to break with the centrist elements around me in the leadership and drive the movement forward into the working class. Special mention was made of Comrades Lucy St. John, Dennis O'Casey and Karen Frankel.

I returned to the United States shell-shocked. I immediately launched a bitter struggle within the leadership of the party and throughout all the branches in the country against this propagandist tendency. The heart of the struggle was with Comrade Lucy St. John and Dennis O'Casey. Supporting those comrades to one extent or another was Jeff Sebastian, Alex Steiner, and Fred Kazelis. In fact I was extremely isolated in that struggle with the support of only some of the young activist layers of the leadership like Esther Galen and Helen Kalyard. Their support was extremely limited by the limits of their own theoretical development. This helps to make clear why a centrist regime could one year later get such a firm grip on the movement once the British threw the considerable weight of their influence behind it.

In the midst of this struggle the position of St. John and O'Casey came out in the open. They launched a direct attack on me claiming all along to have agreed with the Banda letter but to have hidden their position for fear of being attacked. Whether they actually held such a position at that time was not important. What is critical is that once again the Banda letter emerged in the discussion to be seized upon by right-wing elements who resisted the changes we were seeking to make in the leadership of the party. St. John then retreated further and resigned from the party only to return on the very eve of the summer camp.

Then came a new intervention of Comrade Healy. He insisted that the very struggle he had urged me to take up within the party leadership was "factional." He persisted in this view right up to the summer camp using it as an excuse to cancel plans to send a large delegation from the US leadership to our camp. He urged the Australian comrades to abandon their plans to send a sizable delegation as well, stating

that the summer camp would prove to be some sort of "faction fight" by Comrade Wohlforth.

Because we did not simply adapt to the impressions of the British as the British wished us to do (though they would always also denounce us for so doing) we went ahead with the discussion in the party. We made every effort at the same time to hold all comrades in the party winning back Comrade St. John. We turned out among the youth and built our first summer camp into a powerful camp of over 300 working class youth and older workers.

#### B. The 1973 Summer Camp And The Fifth National Conference

The camp was a continuation of the battle within the cadres of the party. It was no faction fight but it was nonetheless a great battle in practice with the propagandists. This layer of the party, the overwhelming majority, kept distant from the youth. This gave us very few forces for struggling politically with the youth, who in turn, were torn apart by the big political issues posed at the camp.

The role of Ronnie R. was typical of this layer. He had succeeded through his energy in bringing to the camp a very large contingent from the Bronx. These youth had gone through no preparation of any kind for the camp. At the camp Ronnie R. kept his distance from these youth leaving the problems some of them caused to others to handle.

The heart of the backward elements at the camp were two brothers from the Bronx. They preached anti-white nationalism as a cover for their anti-Communism and hostility to any discipline. One night they had broken every rule, gotten drunk, and refused to return to their cabins. It became necessary to remove them from the camp. So at 2:00 a.m., in a dense fog, we had to physically remove them from the camp. We took them to Montreal and gave them bus fare to return to New York. They proceeded to drink up the bus fare and take a cab back to the camp. We had to expell them again.

All this took place under conditions of constant police surveillance of the camp. In fact police tried to enter the camp on the occasion of the return of the Bronx duo to the camp. Only a continuous political fight combined with the actual enforcing of discipline at critical moments kept the camp from being broken up by the police. The Ronnie R. layer of the party objectively opposed these efforts of ours.

Another example is that of Comrade Fred Kazelis. Comrade Kazelis was in charge of the guards at the camp. He not only kept his distance from the youth but he would not approach the question of the guards with any seriousness. There was no drive or urgency to his work. Then, on the last night of the camp, the police, a combined force of provincial police and the RCMP advised by the Americans, made an attempt with seven police cars to enter the camp. Comrade Kazelis wanted to agree to their request and admit the police. Comrade Fields objected and then aided by Comrade St. John and others successfully resisted the police insisting upon our rights as lessees of private property.

In the period immediately after the camp Comrade Ronnie R.'s Bronx branch virtually disintegrated. Then Comrade Ronnie R. himself resigned. His resignation was symptomatic of a whole layer. He was a radical activist, a member of the League for a number of years, and very active in our SCLC caucus. Comrade Healy stated to me in May he felt that

Ronnie R.'s dissertation was a running away from the youth and reflected the position of a whole layer.

These two incidents illustrate how the conflict at the 1973 Summer Camp expressed in a concentrated way the whole struggle which would take place in the League during the next year. The camp also brought out the tremendous potential for constructing a revolutionary party in the United States. The response of the youth to a tough fight for Marxism, for revolutionary perspectives, was the dominant characteristic of the camp. The camp reverberated with it. The future of the whole American working class could be seen here in microcosm. The problems were problems essential to a revolutionary and therefore explosive layer of the working class. Those who thought such explosions could be avoided are people who wish to avoid the working class.

This should be understood in the light of the experience of the 1974 camp which was even more explosive. Comrade Ushi from Germany particularly refused to grasp this difficult but necessary side of American (and we tend to think the revolutionary layers of youth in all nations) youth. She insisted we must force the youth all to sit in the same direction, never to talk out of turn or among themselves, and to listen attentively to a lecture on philosophical matters. Perhaps Comrade Ushi can get away with this in Germany. Certainly this can occasionally be accomplished in the United States with university youth. But youth from Brownsville and East New York represent a bit more of a problem. Their very restlessness expresses their revolutionary energies. Discipline is always a matter of struggle which achieves at any point conditions which allow learning to go on--but perhaps just allow it. During 1973 and 1974 I spoke before literally hundreds of restless audiences in which I had to fight for a hearing. At the same time these were the most receptive audiences I ever addressed in 21 years in the revolutionary movement.

The National Conference, which we discussed earlier in relation to the faction which emerged over the trade union question, was actually a continuation of the camp and *vice versa* the camp was a continuation or expression of the issues raised at the conference. There were many problems with holding a camp and conference at the same time. However, the great advantage was that the issues raised on a theoretical level were being lived on a practical level at the camp.

For instance, there was Irving Hall. He could care less how the camp was defended and what happened to the youth in attendance. He looked only for points to pick at to weaken. He hoped, a leadership preoccupied with holding the camp together. He and his wife Judy would hide behind bushes waiting for a trade unionist to walk by. Then he would spring out and seek to gain their support for his faction. The majority of the party who were propagandists did not support Hall, of course. They just hid behind bushes to keep away from the youth. They would have to wait a year before they could pounce.

Comrade Gerry Healy arrived in the middle of the camp. Almost immediately he took to it and saw in it the potential for building a healthy working class party in America. His classes and speeches were a major contribution to the camp and helped to educate a whole section of the party and the youth attending the camp. His central theme was a recognition of the death of the crisis and the revolutionary struggle just ahead within the United States as well as Europe.

### C. The Party 1973-74

The Workers League of the 1973-1974 period was an organization still composed of very conservative people, with little experience in the actual struggles of the working class, leaning toward centrist political positions. However, through a continuous struggle, the League carried through great changes, changes which created the conditions for a very different League to emerge by the summer of 1974. These changes were not brought about easily or peacefully but painfully and through struggle.

We held a meeting launching the twice-weekly Bulletin attended by over 400 people and built the Bulletin's circulation to over 20,000 per issue. We built a series of regional youth conferences attended by over 750 youth. We held a number of local jobs marches culminating in a powerful march against Nixon in Washington. Then we held a national youth conference attended by over 500 youth. We launched two election campaigns in New York and held a series of picnics and other meetings across the country. We held classes continuously, as well as sports weekends and social events. Everywhere in the League, there were problems but everywhere there were new youth forces around the branches and the beginnings of the development of a real youth movement. It represented a sharp change, a leap over the character of the youth movement in the preceding period.

Rather than neglecting trade union work, we also made some serious progress there as well. We held our Dayton auto conference which was highly successful and brought forward a number of older industrial workers around the branches. Above all, through the drive with the paper, we sought to construct the party in the key industrial areas of the Midwest. Thus, with the trailblazing drives, we constructed the Cleveland and Youngstown branches as well as strengthening the Detroit and Dayton branches. Thousands of workers in the basic industries of auto and steel became subscribers and supporters of the Bulletin. This work laid the basis for the future development of the party in the auto plants and steel mills throughout the area.

As the work of the League developed concretely, the opposition to that work, to the change occurring in the League, also took on a more concrete form. We no longer fought about what we should do abstractly. We actually did it. Therefore, layers of the older cadre dropped out of the party. These included an important section of the old leadership of the party such as Pat Connolly, Dan Fried, Karen Arnold, Amy St. John, Dennis O'Casey, Alex Steinay and Jeff Sebastian. Some of these people were forced out of the movement. They dropped out because they did not wish to be part of a movement which fought as the IL fought. They had been radical critics and contributed to the movement at that stage of its development. Now they were called upon to actually take up work in the working class concretely. It was no longer a matter of simply defending the idea that such work should be done. Thus, they split. While they left one by one over a period of time, their leaving was in actuality a real split by a section of the centrist layer of the party who resisted the new course of the party.

Such was the situation as the Second Annual Summer Camp approached. We had changed the League in many respects. We had now begun to

carry out in practice what we had envisioned as early as the 1957 International Youth Assembly. However, our movement was still dominated by conservative elements with little experience in mass struggles and inclined to criticism rather than actual conflict in the workers movement. Many toes had been stepped on to develop the League to this point. Many resented the pressures of party work and the constant struggle to develop the working class forces now in and around the party, to train them as Marxists.

The party had progressed but at the same time the grip of the past was still very heavy upon it. While new forces were around the movement everywhere, only a few of these new forces were actual party members and they were only at a beginning stage of their political training. Thus, while the League had changed, it was very fragile. It would not take alot to destroy what had been built up. In 1957, all that was necessary was to remove those that had struggled to drive the movement forward from a position where they could continue to act effectively to carry on that drive forward. Under such conditions, all the old crap would be revived. And so it was to happen.

D. The Role Of The International Committee

The International Committee, like the Workers League, could not help but be a product of the period out of which it was created. We have always opposed those efforts of Pablo's to create an international apparatus which was artificial in relation to the actual development of the national sections in that particular period. Such an apparatus could only act against the real development of the Fourth International as it did in the 1952-1955 period. And so the development of the IC has been necessarily neglect in terms of a highly structured apparatus and other organizational forms.

The heart of the IC in the period from 1961 to 1970 was the collaboration of the SLL with the French CCI, first in a principled struggle against the revisionism of the SWP and then in laying the foundation for an international Trotskyist youth movement. That period of collaboration was a principled and fruitful one although there were always great strains within it. It is important to note that, throughout that period, the heart of the IC was this collaboration between the SLL and the CCI. Other sections were not yet sufficiently developed to be more than an appendage of one or the other party.

The IC entered an entirely new stage of its existence with the break, and subsequent head-long flight to the right, of the CCI with the IC. Now the IC could no longer simply be the collaboration of two parties. It had to be based on an international collaboration of a group of parties in very different stages of development. In that collaboration the SLL, and in particular Gerry Healy, held the central responsibility. But the IC had to be more than Gerry Healy if it were to develop serious Marxist cadres in a number of countries. It had to have its own life, its own internal discussions in which, as in Trotsky's day, all sections and all members of sections felt free to express opinions, to make amendments to documents, to intervene in the political life of other sections.

However, the IC did not develop this way. It never was allowed

to go beyond the level of small groups basically functioning as appendages of the SLL-SWP. More precisely, the IC never went beyond being an international organization around a single individual, Gerry Healy. Never in Trotsky's days did such a situation exist within the Fourth International. And this was so, despite all the authority Trotsky had through his leadership of the Russian Revolution and during the civil war period as well as through his serious theoretical struggle against Stalinism.

The only section of the IC outside the WRP capable of any independent life and development was the Workers League. This was so because the League had a long history and had built the important beginnings of a movement. It had battled under the most adverse conditions against the revisionists and its leadership had done a considerable amount of writing and theoretical work in their own right. Thus, conflict with the WRP became a central feature to the development of the IC and the future of the IC itself would be tested in that conflict.

The 1972 IC Conference, the first to be held since the break with the French, centered on a struggle against the pragmatic tendencies within the Workers League. These tendencies were expressed in a turn away from the struggle for a labor party during the beginning of the turn to the youth. The League fought to learn the lessons of this intervention in the following period.

E. The April 1974 IC Conference

In April of 1974, the International Conference of the IC was held. At that conference, Comrade Healy intervened in strong support of the perspectives of the Workers League. He held up the League's work as a model for the whole international to follow. He sharply disagreed with the Greek delegate who had insisted on alot of discussion on the reasons for the dissection of Comrade Lucy St. J. and others. He insisted that such losses were brought about because of the changes the party was going through. He held that it was these changes themselves which must first be comprehended.

There were no formal minutes of that session and in fact, there was nothing formal in any way throughout the conference. However, it is important to reprint here a summary of Comrade Healy's remarks taken from notes taken during the session by one of the American delegation:

Wednesday April 10:

**Gerry:** "The meaning of the report (referring to my report on the Workers League) is being diffused by contributions and criticisms of comrades.

"The discussion on the Workers League is a discussion of the IC as a whole because the Workers League is the first section to be built outside of England and within the North American continent where the degeneration of the oldest Trotskyist section-the SWP- has taken place.

"We must analyze the Workers League to provide lessons for the Australian and West German movements. What is at stake is the history of the IC itself when we are discussing the W.L.

"We must look at the difficulties within the US movement as part of the IC experience itself.

"The history of the WL has been one of a series of breaks with centrists from 1961 on. Especially important was the break with Robertson.

"We shouldn't be particularly concerned with comrades taking off.

"The split with Robertson was a good split. Clear issues of international principle were posed. The split was a vital necessity for the development of our movement.

"1964 was a turning point for new experiences when Tim was expelled from the SMP for raising the question of Ceylon. Then the WL was reduced to a small handful. It could only lead a propaganda circle life.

"When we discuss propagandism, it must be seen as a fight over real principles such as that which took place between the Mensheviks and the Bolsheviks. The movement must turn out to learn from the living struggle of masses or it will disintegrate. The fight against propagandism now requires a turn to the masses.

"Lenin said that the revolutionary movement is a great devourer of people. Tim could not help but recruit from students at that point who came to politics not because of the movement of the working class but because of this protest or that protest.

"The SLL's own history shows that the takeover of the Labour Party IS was the action which could take the party into the working class. This was the road to the daily paper in 1969.

"The SLL intervened in the CUI to turn them to the youth and this was the beginning of the AJS. The French, however, adapted to the middle class students who were arrogant protestors. We had to go through a patient struggle with them, holding the opposites and trying to create a practice so that the French could learn.

"The period from 1966-1971 revealed the contradictory experience of the US movement. It agreed on political questions only to retreat in practice into propagandism. However, the WL created the instruments within its own ranks with its paper which would burst asunder the existence of the propagandists. This is because the press required a turn outward to fight to build toward a daily paper.

"We must create conditions for a new practice. You cannot break from propagandism in the head alone. We could not make the break to a daily paper until we settled problems with the propagandists. We had to have the sharpest political discussions within the movement.

"In 1972, when the labor party demand was dropped, we made the sharpest criticisms of the WL but then they started a real campaign over the labor party. When came the turn backward through the debates with Robertson. But then the step forward with the 1973 summer camp.

"The fact that the old propaganda forces take off is necessary for a turn into the working class. The policy of the IC is actually now being carried out within the US in practice. The movement in the US is now an integral part of the IC.

"Now the break with propagandism posed new problems. It takes place when the world crisis brought about by inflation creates confusion within the working class, the youth and the middle class. We now turn to the first flush of new forces. These forces come to us with bourgeois ideology; they don't come as full-fledged revolutionaries. Therefore, we must conduct a full discussion and struggle with these new forces.

"Now we have the sharpest contradiction because the leadership is correct in its policies and the old forces take off. This raises the question of who is going to train the new forces?"

"What is now developing on the West Coast is a new form of propagandism. Just because the old propagandists take off, their ideas

don't leave you. The West Coast opposition is centrist. (Comrade Healy was referring to the centrist, militant trade union position being put forward in the West Coast section of the paper at the time of the carpenters' strike.)

"The new propagandists separate the economic crisis from the development of theory. Therefore, we must have the greatest development of theory in the US. We must bring together our understanding of the economic crisis with theory.

"But the development of theory proceeds out of old forms in which the old propagandists are held onto in order to educate the new forces. Change must come from the center where the fight within the leadership is most intense.

"Because new layers only reflect spontaneity, we must educate new layers in what happened to the old layers. We must take the knowledge we have gained in the struggle with the old layers back into the new layers.

"We must educate our movement by turning to our history, to the split with the Pabloites, with Robertson, with the French. We can only grow, change and develop through the IC."

Comrade Healy took this same approach at the May IC Plenum of the WL. At that Plenum, the main thrust was on the need to educate the cadres of the movement.

What is clear from this actual history of relations between the British and the American movement from January 1973 until the summer camp in 1974 is the following:

(1) Relations between these two movements were continuous and close. Never before in the history of the international Marxist movement had there been such close relations and contact between two sections. Any attempt by the British to claim that their sharp change in position on the Workers League inaugurated at the 1974 Summer Camp was because of lack of information about our movement is completely fraudulent.

(2) Even in the 1973 period these relations were characterized by instable changes in political position on the part of the British leadership. This involved no minor issue but the question of revolutionary perspectives in the United States itself. That these differences were not openly confronted and fought out within the U.S. and internationally reflected the atmosphere which prevailed in international relations within the IC. Open discussion and political struggle was discouraged by Comrade Healy's tendency to push every discussion to the most extreme point and to seek to break the person who disagreed with Comrade Healy. Only a most muted discussion ever took place in the international movement under such conditions.

(3) The position of Comrade Healy and the IC from the summer of 1973 until the late summer of 1974 was one of full support to the perspectives of the Workers League. The Workers League was seen as breaking with propagandism in actual practice and gathering the youth forces needed to build a mass workers party. The loss of the older cadres was understood as a necessary though costly aspect of the correct turn outward of the movement. The League was urged to learn from this experience and educate the new forces through the continuous struggle with the old cadres.

There was another ominous side to the 1974 IC Conference. The fact that that conference took such a favorable stance on the American movement--actually held it up before the whole International for emulation--should not blind us to the great degeneration the Conference represented in other respects. Only by looking at this conference in this manner can we understand how support in one period can so capriciously change into a smashing operation in the next.

The 1972 Conference was not a very formal affair but at least a document had been produced prior to it with some discussion in the sections, and a manifesto was drafted during it. Both documents were published along with a report on the deliberations of the Conference in the period following the Conference. The Conference did not, however, establish a secretariat or in any other manner clarify its structure and rules.

This process degenerated even further at the 1974 Conference. No document of any sort was produced prior to the Conference. No discussion was held whatsoever in the sections before the Conference. In fact very little discussion on perspectives took place during the Conference. Not only was no manifesto issued from the Conference, though a decision was made that such a manifesto be drafted, but there was no public mention of any sort that the Conference even took place.

The Conference registered important growth in a number of sections and in the number of national groups attending. For the first time France, Portugal and Spain were represented. However, no proposals were made to give the IC any form of any sort. Cliff Slaughter remains the unopposed official of the IC. He gives almost no time to this task. There are no elected bodies. The IC is, as we shall see, whatever the Workers Revolutionary Party wants it to be. It is the WRP which writes whatever statements are occasionally issued. It is the WRP which calls whatever meetings of the IC that are held and which determines what sections should attend. It is Comrade Gerry Healy who determines what the WRP determines.

### E. Pabloism And Gerry Healy

In the 1952 and 1953 period, Michel Pablo created great havoc within the international Trotskyist movement. He intervened in section after section of the international movement, expelling this person or tendency and backing that person or tendency. He cared little for the historically created cadres of the weak international movement. As a result Pablo almost completely succeeded in destroying the movement Leon Trotsky founded in 1923.

Trotsky had never functioned that way. He intervened only in the most cautious way in sections. He rarely if ever advocated organizational measures. He saw the problems of the sections as problems of the objective conditions the movements had grown up under. He sought to learn from each difficulty and with infinite patience steer the movement in a revolutionary direction.

Michel Pablo disregarded the cadres of the movement because he began with his own subjective impressions. He was convinced that with his policies, even a few people would quickly succeed in placing themselves in an effective mass position because of his assessment of the objective conditions of the period. He thought he could somehow jump over the isolation which the Trotskyist movement then faced if only the

cadres were "flexible" enough to adapt to the Stalinists, etc.

Michel Pablo's method was the method of subjective idealism. This led in practice to an organizational approach to party building which ignored the problems of building a serious and independent leadership in each country familiar with the problems of the working class of that country, and trained to make decisions on its own, to develop and build its own movement.

Comrade Gerry Healy has in practice in the recent period gone over to the organizational methods of Pablo. Seized by this impression or that, he had intervened in the internal life of a party so as to change the basic character of its leadership and--as is now clear--of its political policies. He has expressed the greatest impatience with the real problems of development of leaderships which themselves are the product of decades of experience. He proceeds from his moods, his impressions.

He is seized by at times what approaches madness for subjective idealism is a form of madness as it rearranges the world according to the individual. He becomes convinced that he is surrounded by CIA agents and proceeds on that basis. Anyone who objects is denounced for being an anti-internationalist. But an internationalist is not a person. To the extent that an international becomes a person, it must express that person's idiosyncratic character.

Comrade Healy did intervene in the internal life of a section. He actually removed the national secretary of a section, the person who had founded the movement. He removed another leading comrade from the party. He did all this without any prior authorization of any international body and without the slightest discussion within the ranks of the section involved. In time his own inquiry would prove his madness of late August to be mere delusion, madness, without a shred of factual basis in the material world outside Gerry Healy's head. The organizational steps which had been based upon this madness are preserved. The leadership is changed. The leading cadres dispersed. The party turned back to centrism.

Comrade Healy proceeds in an impatient way to break up a party as did Pablo. He also shares characteristics with James P. Cannon. To Gerry Healy there is a complete identity between the international movement and his national party, the Workers Revolutionary Party. Internationalism stops at the frontiers of Britain. It is seen as a "principle" which requires the subordination of other parties to the International which is seen as identical with the WRP. To what is the WRP subordinate?

That Gerry Healy should express in his relations with the Workers League tendencies which marked all factions of the earlier movement simply proves our point. The explosion which has taken place between Comrade Healy and the Workers League is of great historic significance. Condensed within this experience is all the past experience of the Fourth International. That such issues now come up is the surest sign that great historic tasks will face us in the next period in all the major countries of the world.

G. The 1974 Summer Camp

Some two weeks before the 1974 Summer Camp I received an emergency phone call from Garry Healy in England. He urged me to drop everything and immediately fly to London. As it so happened, I was in Cleveland holding a meeting with all the branch organizers in the Midwest area. We were in the critical final stage of the drive for the camp. A turn around in the Midwest--an area of great strength for the League in that period--would, combined with New York City, be decisive. We got that change and the Midwest made a major contribution to the 1974 Camp.

I proceeded as soon as I could to England for a one day meeting. It was unlike any other trip in one important respect. I could not for the life of me figure out why I had been summoned. There were problems with the camp but we were fighting them through. Questions of perspectives could be considered in a serious manner in two weeks when the British and other international comrades came to the camp. I was not prepared for the shock I was to receive.

Over the past year we had learned from time to time of the activities of the former party members. Comrade Frankel in particular had conducted an intermittent gossip campaign against the party leadership among these former party members. The campaign was intermittent because, like the other comrades who had left the movement were pre-occupied with their personal lives. This campaign was 90% personal gossip. The 10% politics reflected the political outlook of the Hall-Gagnon forces at the 1973 conference.

Over the summer of 1974 this grouping once again began to be formed. This time Comrade Gagnon, who had a centrist group of Haitians around him, combined with Comrade Frankel bringing in Jeff Sebastian and Alex Steiner. The latter two comrades had a long history of propagandist resistance within the leadership of the party. This group sent Gagnon to England.

Gagnon was surprised by his welcome in England. Comrade Healy received him with open arms. He listened to every criticism with relish. Even the most outlandish gossip was carefully noted down for future use. Comrade Healy immediately jumped to the conclusion that this group had been forced out of the movement, that the movement had been virtually liquidated over the past year, that the policies which he had himself spoken against in 1973 were after all correct policies. My 14 years of close and loyal collaboration with Comrade Healy and the British movement carried no weight. The assessment of the situation in the League and its work developed in common through close collaboration over the past year was conveniently forgotten. The position of the International Committee itself arrived at in Conference with sections present from throughout the world was of no consequence. Comrade Healy had, after all, seen the light.

Comrade Healy, however, did not leave matters there. He added his own element. He immediately concluded that the loss of leading members over the past year was the work of the CIA! This was Comrade Healy's original contribution having never occurred to either Gagnon or Frankel. After all, as he saw it, the League was breaking up. The CIA would like to see the League break up. Therefore, the CIA must be at work. Americans are familiar with such reasoning from the Labor

Committee. Marcus holds that since Baraka's work and other community controllers aid capitalism--they are all CIA men, or KGB men, Rockefeller men, etc.

Comrade Healy began immediately to seek to discover who was the CIA agent in the leadership of the League. Since Comrade Fields was relatively new in the leadership, and in addition had been associated with the whole past year's drive into the youth and thus hated by those who had left the League, she was his prime suspect. Such was the situation when I arrived at Heathrow airport.

I was whisked to a special meeting with Comrade Healy also attended by Comrade Banda and other comrades. The following was immediately proposed: (1) the whole past year had been a mistake, a turn into community politics and a retreat from the working class; (2) the former party members who had left were driven out by myself and Comrade Fields who represented a clique leadership; (3) Comrade Fields was probably a CIA agent; (4) there was to be no national conference this Fall; (5) the group of former party members was to be urged to come to the camp for discussions and brought back into the party without discussion.

Comrade Gagnon was then brought in. He went into a recital of the most absurd gossip. He then became choked up, started to cry and seized me hugging me declaring his deep personal devotion to me. Then off he flew back to New York to organize his group for the camp. Comrade Healy persisted with his view that I had virtually completely destroyed the movement over the last year.

I returned to the United States a bit shell shocked. The British comrades, I thought, had always been right. They must now be right. I did my best to hold to that position while I proceeded to build the summer camp--now less than a week away.

Comrade Fields, Comrade Galen and myself proceeded to set up the camp. Comrades and youth rolled in from throughout the United States and Canada. Despite every difficulty it was a bigger camp than in 1973. The youth at the camp felt more a part of the Young Socialists with a layer of them having participated in the IS for at least a period of time. There were also more new trade unionists there than last year.

The role of the party comrades also represented a change. The comrades had had much more experience working with youth and were able to fight among them politically better than the preceding year. Also a layer of propagandists was not there. There were fewer party members at the camp than last year. Thus the camp was not only larger numerically but a larger proportion of the camp were non-party youth and workers. This represented a difficult challenge for the party members at the camp. A new youth leadership was only in its beginning stage of development.

There was also a changed political situation since the last camp. The crisis was now here. For these youth the future was the present. There was no way out--no prospect of jobs, of a future. Therefore these youth were confronted with revolutionary tasks now--they face now what the whole class will soon face. The reaction among these youth had to be contradictory. They put forward every bit of backwardness, every bit of individualistic resistance they had in them--as part of the process of breaking with backwardness and individualism. This gave to the camp an exclusive character.

The party had definitely developed since the last camp. However, the objective situation had developed at a faster pace than the party cadres had developed. The party was thus behind the requirements posed in this new period. This was the contradiction which the camp faced. This real, material contradiction needed to be faced up to not only to preserve the camp but to learn from the camp so as to shape the course of work over the next period.

This is why the first days of the camp became preoccupied with the question of discipline. It actually took longer this year than last to get some agreement on the rules which governed the camp. Even after this agreement was reached the disciplinary problem would plague the camp to its last day. The question of discipline was the form in which the question of revolution itself was concretely posed to the youth at the camp. Thus the first days of the camp involved a rich discussion and a rich experience.

Anyone who now dismisses this experience as a "disaster" dismisses the real material struggle to build a movement of workers. The revolutionary party itself is a "disaster" in the sense that its perpetual crises reflect in its highest form the contradictory class forces at work within the working class itself. The United States is the center of the capitalist crisis. A peaceful, orderly camp would reflect only the unreal, idealist distance of such a camp from the class struggle in America.

Comrade Healy arrived from England in the midst of this very fruitful but difficult camp. By this time the camp had begun to settle in. We were finally able to hold small group discussions and these discussions vibrated with theoretical conflict and life. Comrade Healy, however, was proceeding on another wave length, with another fixed image of "reality" in his head. He would collide with and disrupt this process irreparably.

Comrade Healy sent Comrade Slaughter ahead of him to make sure it was "safe" for him to come. Comrade Slaughter was to call England to reassure Healy. A special Political Committee meeting of the WLP was scheduled to decide whether or not Comrade Healy would be allowed to come to the camp without risking his life. Such was the absurd and hysterical state Comrade Healy had whipped himself and those around him into. Comrade Slaughter phoned England to reassure Comrade Healy that the trip would be safe and Comrade Healy came.

Immediately upon arriving in Canada Comrade Healy began on the question of the CIA. He had instructed Comrade Gagnon to get a dossier on Comrade Fields. He was ably assisted in this task by Comrade Frankel and Comrade Neal F. They had "discovered" what had been common knowledge in the movement for years--Comrade Field's uncle had worked for the CIA until 1961. Comrade Fields had broken off all relations of any sort with her uncle in 1964 and had worked her way through college. Comrade Frankel had been her roommate in college and was well aware of this whole situation. Comrade Frankel added to the report her opinion that it was absurd to consider Comrade Fields a CIA agent. This last part of the dossier was ignored. Comrade Healy was now convinced he was in the midst of a nest of the CIA. He even considered the thought that the whole Workers League was a CIA front.

Comrade Healy was possessed with this thought. He even feared for his life once he learned that Comrade Fields was aware of the location of his motel!

A meeting was immediately organized of IC comrades at the camp. I was accused of harboring and covering for a CIA agent. It was stated that I had failed to report on Comrade Field's past CIA "connections" at the time of the last IC Conference which Comrade Fields attended as a delegate. This endangered our Comrades in Spain, Greece and Peru. It was then added that when in England I had hid this information from Comrade Healy once again. I pointed out (1) I considered it absurd to even think that Comrade Fields was a CIA agent; (2) Not only I but no one in the leadership would even consider there was anything to report to the IC on this matter and thus it occurred to no one to make such a report; (3) Comrade Fields' old family connection had not been remembered by me when Comrade Healy raised the question in late August. I tried as best I could to accept everything Comrade Healy stated in the way of criticism of the League and my functioning. I know doubt accepted more than I should have. But I simply could not accept this charge against Fields. It was too preposterous. Therefore Comrade Healy was determined to break me. He almost succeeded--but not quite.

#### He, A Leadership Is Changed

Comrade Healy proceeded to negotiate completely on his own to bring the former party comrades back into the party and at the same time to build up a group in the League against myself and Comrade Field. Comrade Kazelis was groomed quickly for party leadership. Every bit of scandal or accusation was carefully dragged out of leading comrades.

Towards the end of the week, Comrade Healy organized a special meeting with the former party members with which he was meeting secretly in an isolated section of the camp. The camp we used was a children's camp both a boys camp on one side of the lake and a girls camp on the other. While we rented both sides of the lake we used one side only to house the older comrades and family people. What was meant Comrade Healy was meeting the former party members. During the entire negotiation I as National Secretary did not even see the comrades.

The Political Committee was taken in a large van across to the other side of the lake. There we sat silently with the former party comrades and Comrade Healy proposed their readmission. Without so much as a word being said the Political Committee voted the comrades back into the party. Among those voted back in was Karen Frankel who had played a central role in the gossip campaign against the leadership for most of a year. While the other comrades returned to the other side of the camp and stayed with the youth in the cabins, Comrade Frankel stayed in a motel. Two weeks after the camp she resigned again from the party having accomplished her goal.

On Friday night Comrade Healy, at the suggestion of the German comrade called a special meeting of the Central Committee of the Workers League, attended also by IC members present at the camp.

At this meeting everyone was encouraged to denounce the leadership of the party in order to bolster the characterization of the past year of party work as liquidationism. Comrade Healy called the session "Christmas" and thoroughly enjoyed it.

It was at this meeting that Comrade Healy first proposed that I be removed as National Secretary of the party. In actual practice, the shift in leadership was already well underway. By Saturday Comrade Mazelis—without a vote of any body of the party or international—was already making the major decisions on the camp grounds without even consulting me.

The next Central Committee was called for midnight on Saturday night when the camp would be settled down. In attendance were almost 40 people. Comrade Healy started the discussion with his charges that Comrade Fields was an agent of the CIA. I was held complicit in the situation was not reporting it to the IC at the last Conference or in my discussions with Gerry in the middle of August.

As could be expected with such a charge, an atmosphere of complete hysteria dominated the meeting. Comrade Fields requested permission to go to the ladies room. Comrade Healy insisted that she be accompanied by two guards. Comrade Healy in an extremely emotional state completely dominated the proceedings. In the middle of these proceedings I stated that I disagreed with the whole proceedings. This produced an extreme reaction in Comrade Healy.

It was this very mild resistance on my part which encouraged Comrade Healy to go ahead with the already well developed plans to remove me as National Secretary. Comrade Healy proposed that Comrade Mazelis put forward a motion to remove me as National Secretary and to suspend Comrade Fields from party membership pending an investigation into the CIA charges. This Mazelis did and it passed unanimously receiving even my vote and that of Comrade Fields. Then Comrade Healy proposed that I nominate Comrade Mazelis as National Secretary. I proceeded to do so and it passed unanimously. In this fashion Comrade Healy intervened into the internal affairs of the Workers League, changed a leadership which was the product of 24 years of history—all without any serious discussion in the party on any level.

I shortly discovered that the action taken on August 31 was definitive in character. A special meeting of the IC was called which after the fact: (1) endorsed Comrade Healy's totally unauthorized actions; (2) specifically barred me from any role in the day to day political leadership of the party; and (3) barred Comrade Fields from any contact with the League of any sort. I offered my resignation from the League in response to this action. To continue in the League would have been a mockery of the entire struggle which had preceded August 31.

Then an inquiry commission composed of Comrade Alex Mitchell and Fred Mazelis was formed and met. It decided after an investigation that after all there was no substance at all in the charges levelled against Comrade Fields in relation to the CIA! Thus Comrade Healy's own inquiry concluded that the actions of August 31st had been based completely on the unsubstantiated whimsy of Comrade Healy. The commission stopped its inquiry at that point—never probing how it was such wild charges could be allowed to be issued by a man in authority in an international movement and a leadership changed on the basis of these charges.

As the inquiry commission specifically invited me to return to the party—though very consciously not restoring me to the position of National Secretary and specifically barring Comrade Fields from holding any office for two years—I decided to apply for membership in the League. I felt it was best that the discussion that was so desperately needed on these events and on revolutionary perspectives take place within the Workers League which as politically part of the International Committee would mean a discussion within the IC as well.

Comrade Mazelis seemed agreeable to this proposal—until he consulted Comrade Healy. It was Comrade Healy, who holds no post in the IC, who rejected my application for membership in the Workers League insisting that I must first appear before the IC. I rejected this proposal as a maneuver intending to bloc my return to the party, aimed at bolstering the weak centrist leadership of Mazelis, and preventing any serious opposition to develop within any section of the IC to the policies of Comrade Healy.

This position is completely consistent with the Statutes of the Fourth International passed at the 1933 Wounding Conference. The Statutes clearly state: "In all countries the members of the Fourth International are organized into parties or leagues, which constitute the national sections of the Fourth International (World Party of the Socialist Revolution)." Therefore, the Fourth International never recognized any relationship of an individual directly to the International. It always insisted upon the membership of individuals in sections, these sections thus being related to the International. To by-pass this correct procedure would be to recognize Comrade Healy's personal usurpation of the Fourth International.

I then appealed to Comrade Mazelis for my right to appeal his decision to the National Conference of the Workers League. Again I urged reconsideration so that the absolutely unavoidable discussion be carried on within the party and the IC. This proposal, after consultation with Comrade Healy, was also rejected.

I have therefore been left with no other alternative than to remain silent as the Workers League turns to centrism and the principles of internationalism are being trampled upon or—to place my assessment of this situation before the working class public. I have chosen the latter course. Any other course would be unprincipled.

### I. Where We Stand Today

Where, then, do we find ourselves? We can only enter the present shaped by our past. The past of the whole Fourth International has been characterized by an extremely sharp contradiction. Only the Fourth International defended and developed Marxism over the last decades. But this very same movement has been unable to live its ideas, to be a part of living revolutionary struggles. It has been sold out of a non-revolutionary generation, even generations.

The tremendous weight of centrism which this engenders within the Workers League—today it dominates—reflects an international phenomenon. What is distinctive about the American situation is that the paucity of theory is most pronounced in this technologically most developed capitalist society. Our movement could not go far beyond the limits of our day, and the peculiarities of American development.

We have been involved in a determined battle against centrism for two full decades now in the Fourth International. These recent events illustrate that this battle is far from over. We have in one sense lost each skirmish with centrism since 1952. That sense is that the cadres of our movement have time and again succumbed to centrism and drifted away from the revolutionary struggle. These included many very good and dedicated people. But they have been devoured by the times. First, thousands were lost in the battle with Pablo. Then thousands again were lost in the 1960s. There was the break of the SWP with the IC, the renegades of the ISGP in Ceylon, Robertson's wrecking operation, the drift to social democratic positions on the part of the CFI of France. Now what remains of the international committee is being treated in the most cavalier manner by a man who fought the centrists. In this respect Comrade Healy follows the path of Comrade Cannon.

This is not an unusual development for the Marxist movement. Marx and Engels were almost the only survivors of the generation of 48ers to persist in the revolutionary struggle. They were surrounded by a generation of lilliputians. Lenin stood quite alone within the Second International at the time of World War I. Even Lenin, who had fought revisionism for so long, was surprised by the extent of the collapse of the German party before its own bourgeoisie. Trotsky was, again, the sole survivor of the revolutionary generation of Communists--perhaps the greatest revolutionary generation of all time.

It was James P. Cannon who developed the reactionary idealist theory that a cadre could somehow be "preserved" as one preserves fruit in order to lead a movement in a future period. The revolutionist of one generation who survives to the next is the rarest exception. Such individual exceptions are extremely important precisely because of this rarity. Such individuals embody great experience. This is why we must proceed with such care, with such restraint and caution, when moving organizationally with a cadre.

In the history of the revolutionary movement, as in nature and biological processes, there have been breaks in continuity. In fact this has been the dominant development. All signpost to the fact that we are presently witnessing such a break. But history is history. What has happened, happened. The truth eventually finds roots among the new revolutionary forces and these roots lay a basis for a swift development of the next revolutionary generation. We hope that this document may contribute to this.

We have been able over the past 21 years to make some important contributions to the development of the workers movement in the United States and internationally. This history, which cannot be undone, has helped lay a basis for the next revolutionary development in this country.

In 1956, in response to the Hungarian Revolution, we took up a struggle against the centrism of Max Shachtman. This historic fight was the first blow in the struggle against centrism delivered by a new post-war generation of revolutionists. Then, together with the leadership of the SWP, we launched the Young Socialist Alliance, the first Trotskyist youth movement in America since 1940. That struggle was of the greatest importance because it established an important foothold for Trotskyism among youth prior to the massive student movements of the late 1960s.

In 1961 we joined with the SLL and the French movement in a fight against the revisionism of the SWP leadership. Our fight within the SWP is not to be minimized. It was the only internal party struggle against Pabloism in that whole period. It raged from January 1961 until August of 1964. The documents of that stand as an historic record of what we achieved and the principled basis upon which we collaborated with the IC.

Between 1964 and 1971 we persisted in a most difficult struggle to construct a principled Trotskyist movement. Starting with only eight people, we persisted and built up the strength to acquire our own web offset plant and to launch our paper as a twice-weekly. We stood up to the centrism of Robertson and stood by the international committee in a continuous struggle for principles. Only the Workers League has such a history!

In 1971 we made a turn into the working class youth. This turn was successfully carried out despite the greatest internal crisis in the history of our movement. This cannot be denied. We stand by the years 1973-74 as the highest point in the development of the Trotskyist movement in the United States since the 1930s.

We surpassed the earlier movement in the United States in an important respect. Only our movement penetrated the revolutionary layers of minority working class youth. Only our movement touched those forces central to the forging of a revolutionary, as distinct from centrist-radical, movement in America.

What now lies ahead? So far we have dealt with only one side of the contradictory situation we now face. It is true we lost the skirmishes with the centrists but we won the theoretical fight at each point. We have left a priceless heritage in this theoretical struggle. This now passes on to the new generation of revolutionary fighters who face the big battles with the capitalist class itself.

This is not 1957 when we started the YSA under conditions of the isolation created by the boom and the McCarthyite witchhunt. This is not even 1969-70 when a massive movement of students took place in the absence of any powerful political movement of the working class. Today the capitalist crisis is here and now. It cannot be denied. Everyone must face up to it one way or another. Tremendous political struggles of the working class lie just ahead. The Boston March is but the weakest expression of a powerful movement in preparation.

New forces are already beginning to be stirred up by the colossal class energies seething just beneath the surface. These forces are not likely to emerge among the old radical forces. What is wrong with the Workers League is wrong with the rest of the radical movement. The great crime of the Kozelski leadership lies precisely in the extent to which it reflects this centrism which dominates all sections of the American radical movement.

The United States suffocates today intellectually under the weight of its own technology. But this very same advanced technology lays a material basis for a tremendous leap in that most materialist of sciences--Marxism. What has been achieved in physics, chemistry, astronomy and the like will pale before the leaps in knowledge social man can make through those who are willing to reflect in their thinking the aspirations and movement of the world's most powerful and technologically developed working class: the American working class.

## **Confessions of a "Renegade":**

# **Wohlforth Terminated**

In an account reminiscent of Jay Lovestone's recitation of the crimes of Stalin, ex-Workers League National Secretary Tim Wohlforth has now surfaced with a long document about his frame-up and purge at the hands of Gerry Healy, boss of the British Workers Revolutionary Party and godfather of the Workers League. After more than a decade of glorying in his role of fawning American junior partner to Healy, Wohlforth was unceremoniously dumped and replaced by his long-time lieutenant, Fred Mazelis (see "Workers League Crumbles," *WV*, No. 56, 8 November 1974). The ouster was carried out personally by none other than Healy himself.

While Wohlforth's lurid 39-page account ("The Workers League and the International Committee," 11 January 1975) is evidently truthful as a description, it betrays a stunning lack of political understanding. Throughout his reign as tinpot despot of the Workers League Wohlforth slavishly emulated his mentor's organizational practices of suppression and slander, the deliberate destruction of cadres and the invocation of the absolute authority of the "International Committee" to intimidate any stirrings of opposition among the membership. Now that Healy has turned the notorious Wohlforthite "method" against Wohlforth himself, the deposed former accomplice finds the only possible explanation to be that Healy has suddenly lost his mind:

"He is seized by at times what approaches madness for subjective idealism is a form of madness as it

rearranges the world according to the individual. He becomes convinced that he is surrounded by CIA agents and proceeds on that basis. Anyone who objects is denounced for being an anti-internationalist...."

Subjective idealism must be pretty rampant in Healyite circles. Wohlforth makes the following modest assessment of the import of his removal as National Secretary: "The explosion which has taken place between Comrade Healy and the Workers League is of great historic significance. Condensed within this experience is all the past experience of the Fourth International." By way of contrast, the Spartacist tendency was compelled to break from Healy in 1962 in order to maintain our political integrity, but we refused to characterize Healy/Wohlforth's unprincipled organizational maneuvering as politically definitive (much less world-historic) until 1967 when it acquired a clear programmatic basis.

Wohlforth's testimony amply confirms every organizational allegation ever made by the Spartacist tendency, but for Wohlforth commencing only on 30-31 August 1974 when the skies fell in on him. Wohlforth's fundamental response to every exposure by us of the Workers League's cynical opportunism, Stalinist-style gansterism and fraudulent "mass" posturing has always been that Spartacist is no good because it is "anti-internationalist"—i.e., that we refused to unquestioningly accept the "discipline" of the International Committee. We replied that the IC is no Marxist international, and "the IC" is but an empty abstrac-

tion to cover rotten politics, akin to the Stalinists' abuse of "the Party."

### The Horse's Mouth

Now let us see what Wohlforth has to say today about the International Committee:

"...It never was allowed to go beyond the level of small groups basically functioning as appendages of the SLL-WRP [Socialist Labour League was the earlier name of the Workers Revolutionary Party, Healy's British group]. More precisely, the IC never went beyond being an international organization around a single individual, Gerry Healy....

"...That these differences were not openly confronted and fought out within the U.S. and internationally reflected the atmosphere which prevailed in international relations within the IC. Open discussion and political struggle was discouraged by Comrade Healy's tendency to push every discussion to the most extreme point and to seek to break the person who disagreed with Comrade Healy. Only a most muted discussion ever took place in the international movement under such conditions....

"...There are no elected bodies. The IC is, as we shall see, whatever the Workers Revolutionary Party wants it to be. It is the WRP which writes whatever statements are occasionally issued. It is the WRP which calls whatever meetings of the IC that are held and which determines what sections should attend. It is Comrade Gerry Healy who determines what the WRP determines....

"...To Gerry Healy there is a complete identity between the international movement and his national party, the Workers Revolutionary Party. Internationalism stops at the frontiers of Britain. It is seen as a 'principle' which requires the subordination of *other* parties to the international which is seen as identical with the WRP. To what is the WRP subordinate?"

Well, former head of the American section, you should know. Only, we always thought you liked it that way!

### Healy as Big Daddy

Wohlforth always dismissed the Spartacist tendency's allegations about

the grossly bureaucratic practices of the Healy/Wohlforth regimes with smug demands that we demonstrate upon what materially privileged stratum the WL regime is based. In his present document, however, Wohlforth (never one to worry too much about consistency) makes no attempt to locate any "material base" for Healy's conduct. He simply declares that the Workers League has reverted to centrism (a term, incidentally, which he employs for every variety of political animal, including Max Shachtman in 1956 as the latter prepared to liquidate into CIA-influenced American social democracy). Yet there is a certain sociological logic to the Healyites' practices.

The Healy organization's attempts to work within the British labor movement have been uniformly sterile and disastrous. At one or another time over the past twenty years they have amassed a certain following among dock workers, construction workers, coal miners and auto workers, and have nothing but their ex-supporters' bitterness at the Healyite oscillations between adventurism and opportunism to show for it. (Their present "mass base" in the television and film industries can be expected to go the same route, although perhaps somewhat more eccentrically considering the vision of social reality as refracted through a television camera.)

But the Healy organization has been quite successful in maintaining a relatively large, flashy, high-turnover youth operation which every year draws in sizeable numbers of militant British youth by offering them pageants, dancing, rock bands and sports events together with a dash of "socialism," miscellaneous marches and lots of newspaper selling. The British masses are infused virtually throughout with a relatively very high degree of class consciousness, so that even the semi-lumpenized youth from whom the Healyites recruit characteristically share a strongly class-conscious outlook, even if their capacity to intervene in the class struggle is marginal and episodic.

But since such layers lack both the

discipline of the labor process and any obvious immediate personal use for knowledge, a high-volume, high-turnover operation aimed at them necessarily requires a strong dose of authoritarianism and the manipulative use of dogma as a substitute for program. Thus we can attribute to the Healyites a lumpenproletarian component as the context for their opportunist/adventurist oscillations and systematic organizational abuses.

### Wohlforth as Huey P. Newton

Beginning in the summer of 1971 Wohlforth, evidently in association with Healy, launched the Workers League on a sharp turn "to the youth" intended to parallel the British technique. But the attempt to import the WRP style of semi-lumpen youth organizing intensified the contradiction between "Trotskyism" and the requirements of such an operation. The corresponding layers in American society to the raw material of Healy's Young Socialists are overwhelmingly ghettoized black and Spanish-speaking youth, a generation or two removed from rural isolation and poverty, very heavily chronically unemployed, in a country with no political class consciousness and themselves with so little access to the labor movement that economic class consciousness often appears as a privilege of older white workers aimed against minority-group youth. While Healy's pseudo-Trotskyism associated with a semi-lumpen base makes a certain kind of sense in class-conscious Britain, a nationalist or Maoist rhetoric corresponds far more closely to the ideological proclivities of American raw ghetto youth.

Very serious and dedicated revolutionists can indeed be recruited from such strata, but under prevailing conditions only by the individuals' involved breaking, through a difficult, lengthy (and often unsuccessful) process, from ghetto existence and its dominant ideologies. But the Healy/Wohlforth approach—which is strikingly analogous to government summer programs for

restless youth—is not intended to lead to the crystallization of black and Spanish-speaking communist cadres but to supply a "mass" base for a mock-extremist political operation. Therefore the Workers League found itself forced to parallel the techniques of, for example, the Black Panthers: an infallible leader and a militarized regime to impose discipline.

The Workers League turn toward "youth in the neighborhoods" was evidently seen by Wohlforth as a bulwark against "liquidation" into "trade union work." He explains that political backwardness "makes it so easy for demagogic forces to maneuver within the unions disguising themselves as militants. Union policy alone is insufficient to flush them out." This is, of course, true given the Wohlforthites' crassly opportunist line in their every encounter with the union bureaucracy, which Wohlforth defends at some length over the example of support to Arnold Miller of the Mine Workers.

Not surprisingly, Wohlforth is unable to grasp what is wrong with his organization's incursions into the labor movement. For example, his only criticism of the "Trade Unionists for a Labor Party" operation is that the Workers League liquidated its public face into this front group; there is no mention of the fact that the front group's program deliberately omitted any mention of the crucial political issues facing the working class at that time, racial oppression and the Vietnam war. No wonder Wohlforth thinks that the only way to avoid opportunist trade unionists—i.e., cynical but articulate cadres who will sooner or later abandon the small change of the Workers League to carve out careers within the union bureaucracy—is to build a base in a milieu which is deeply alienated from the labor movement.

The document is full of vituperative attacks against "conservative," "abstract propagandist" forces in the Workers League who "represented a centrist retreat from the construction of a revolutionary youth movement" and counterposed a call for more trade-

union work. (Before accepting the bogeyman of a Workers League totally submerged in the unions, we should point out that in the entire document the only trade-union fraction mentioned—although there are references to journalistic coverage of other industries—is a white collar fraction in the SSEU composed of college graduates.) These elements are castigated for holding themselves aloof from the militants drawn around the youth organizing; at the summer camps, for example, they even "hid behind bushes to keep away from the youth."

What these summer camps were actually like is testified to by Wohlforth:

"...the first days of the [1974] camp became preoccupied with the question of discipline. It actually took longer this year than last to get some agreement on the rules which governed the camp. Even after this agreement was reached the disciplinary problem would plague the camp to its last day. . . . Anyone who now dismisses this experience as a 'disaster' dismisses the real material struggle to build a movement of workers. . . . The United States is the center of the capitalist crisis. A peaceful, orderly camp would reflect only the unreal, idealist distance of such a camp from the class struggle in America."

It may be surmised that some of the Workers League members balked at serving as wardens for restless youth lured to these events by means such as those of which Wohlforth boasts in explaining the great "success" of the 1973 YS conference:

"We held talent shows and bazaars and other events during the course of building for the conference. . . . At the end of the conference, a highly successful dance was held with a well-known band."

### The Ax Falls

Internally in the Spartacist League around 1966, the following historical analogy was presented: Stalin/Healy, Foster/Wohlforth, Browder/Mazelis. Yet now even after the fact Tim Wohlforth is obviously unable to make head or tail of the reason for his dramatic

fall from grace.

The first intimation of trouble occurred in 1973, when Wohlforth received a letter from the WRP's Mike Banda criticizing his draft resolution on American perspectives and insisting on "the primacy of the European Revolution—particularly in England" in apparent counterposition to Wohlforth's emphasis, allegedly based on Healy's remarks to a Workers League plenum, on the "understanding that the center of the world capitalist crisis was the crisis of American capitalism." In the present document Wohlforth criticizes Banda for the latter's infatuation with the Vietnamese and Chinese Stalinists, an astute observation coming a mere ten years or so after our tendency had noted that self-same fact. Wohlforth's response to becoming the recipient of two different lines from England was to try "as best we could to straddle the contradictory positions put forward by Healy in January and Banda in March."

But the ax was first unsheathed in conjunction with "a series of classes which we opened up to the Spartacist group" (i.e., the Workers League violated its long-standing practice of excluding Spartacist members from publicly advertised events). Wohlforth describes his peremptory summons to England:

"In late June the British comrades called me over for consultations. They were particularly upset by a reference in one of the classes which suggested that the relations between the British and French movements had been one of compromise. . . . The British intervention, however, took on an extreme character. Every even potential difference was magnified to an absurd degree. I was even attacked as being an American pragmatist for purchasing an American rather than a British web offset press! As the week progressed the hyperbola progressed. By the end of the week's visit the British comrades—more exactly Comrade Healy—threatened to break a 12 year political relationship with the League over this single sentence.

"The night before I was to fly back the discussion—actually a one way shouting match—went on until 2:30 a.m. I was

sent to bed with all political relations broken. A public statement was to appear in the *Workers Press* [Healy's newspaper]. Then at 5:30 a.m. I was awakened for one last meeting with Comrade Healy at which I was told I would be given one last chance. I was to fight for the very life of the League against centrism within it.... Particularly I had to break with the centrist elements around me in the leadership and drive the movement forward into the working class. Special mention was made of Comrades Lucy St. John, Dennis O'Casey and Karen Frankel.

"I returned to the United States shell-shocked. I immediately launched a bitter struggle within the leadership of the party and throughout all the branches in the country...."

Having evidently interpreted his instructions as a license to undertake a wholesale purge, Wohlforth proceeded to drive out of the Workers League virtually every prominent experienced cadre (see "Whatever Happened to the Workers League?" in *WV* No. 53, 27 September 1974). How hollow now ring Wohlforth's pious words about the preservation of cadres: "Such individuals embody great experience. This is why we must proceed with such care, with such restraint and caution, when moving organizationally with a cadre."

Apparently Healy had not anticipated such carnage, because he intervened again claiming that "the very struggle he had urged me to take up within the party leadership was 'factional'." But he apparently was not yet prepared to move against Wohlforth, for at the April 1974 International Committee conference he held up the Workers League "as a model" and squelched the Greek delegate who requested a full discussion on the hemorrhaging of leading Workers Leaguers.

### A Method in Healy's Madness?

Wohlforth was finally removed at the 1974 Workers League summer camp. Wohlforth's own recitation of the events indicates that here was a man who was prepared to capitulate time after time over any political or organizational question, until he was brought face to

face with the ultimate insult: Healy's charge that Comrade Fields, Wohlforth's close companion, was an agent of the CIA.

Wohlforth recounts that two weeks before the camp he was again summoned to England. When he arrived:

"I was whisked to a special meeting with Comrade Healy also attended by Comrade Banda and other comrades. The following was immediately proposed: (1) the whole past year had been a mistake, a turn into community politics and a retreat from the working class; (2) the former party members who had left were driven out by myself and Comrade Fields who represented a clique leadership; (3) Comrade Fields was probably a CIA agent; (4) there was to be no national conference this Fall; (5) the group of former party members was to be urged to come to the camp for discussions and brought back into the party without discussion with the PC...."

"I returned to the United States a bit shell shocked. The British comrades, I thought, had always been right. They must now be right. I did my best to hold to that position while I proceeded to build the summer camp--now less than a week away...."

"Comrade Healy sent Comrade Slaughter ahead of him to make sure it was 'safe' for him to come. Comrade Slaughter was to call England to reassure Healy. A special Political Committee meeting of the WRP was scheduled to decide whether or not Comrade Healy would be allowed to come to the camp without risking his life...."

"Immediately upon arriving in Canada Comrade Healy began on the question of the CIA.... Comrade Healy was now convinced he was in the midst of a nest of the CIA. He even considered the thought that the whole Workers League was a CIA front...."

"A meeting was immediately organized of IC comrades at the camp. I was accused of harboring and covering for a CIA agent. It was stated that I had failed to report on Comrade Fields' past CIA 'connections'.... I tried as best I could to accept everything Comrade Healy stated in the way of criticism of the League and my functioning. I no doubt accepted more than I should have. But I simply could not accept this charge against Fields...."

"The Political Committee was taken in a large van across to the other side of the lake. There we sat silently with the former party comrades and Comrade Healy proposed their readmission. Without so much as a word being said the Political Committee voted the comrades back into the party....

"On Friday night Comrade Healy, at the suggestion of the German comrade, called a special meeting of the Central Committee of the Workers League, attended also by IC members present at the camp. At this meeting everyone was encouraged to denounce the leadership of the party in order to bolster the characterization of the past year of party work as liquidationism. Comrade Healy called the session 'Christmas' and thoroughly enjoyed it. It was at this meeting that Comrade Healy first proposed that I be removed as National Secretary of the party. In actual practice, the shift in leadership was already well underway....

"Comrade Healy started the discussion [at the next Central Committee] meeting with his charges that Comrade Fields was an agent of the CIA. I was held complicit in the situation [by] not reporting it to the IC.... In the middle of these proceedings I stated that I disagreed with the whole proceedings. This produced an extreme reaction in Comrade Healy.

"It was this mild resistance on my part which encouraged Comrade Healy to go ahead with the already well developed plans to remove me as National Secretary. Comrade Healy proposed that Comrade Mazelis put forward a motion to remove me as National Secretary and to suspend Comrade Fields from party membership pending an investigation into the CIA charges. This Mazelis did and it passed unanimously receiving even my vote and that of Comrade Fields. Then Comrade Healy proposed that I nominate Comrade Mazelis as National Secretary. I proceeded to do so and it passed unanimously....

"I shortly discovered that the action taken on August 31 was definitive in character. A special meeting of the IC was called which after the fact: (1) endorsed Comrade Healy's totally unauthorized actions; (2) specifically barred me from any role in the day to day political leadership of the party; (3) barred Comrade Fields from any contact with the League of any sort. I

offered my resignation from the League in response to this action. To continue in the League would have been a mockery of the entire struggle which had preceded August 31."

Subsequently a commission of inquiry consisting of two people including Mazelis cleared Fields of the charge of being a CIA agent (although, with typical arbitrariness, after being acquitted she was barred from holding office for two years). On the commission's invitation, Wohlforth reapplied for membership. Healy, however, ruled that Wohlforth must first appear before the IC, which Wohlforth refused to do.

Stalin is reported to have told the Lovestonite leaders in Moscow, "By the time you get back only your wives will support you." Is it possible that Healy was pursuing an analogous method in his choice of technique for the disposal of Wohlforth—finding in Wohlforth's relationship with Fields the key to one abuse which even Wohlforth, with his apparently limitless appetite for political self-abasement, would be unable to swallow?

What is even less clear in the Wohlforth document are the precise reasons for Healy's decision to heave his American epigone over the side. One can speculate about the role of Banda or the possibility that Healy felt threatened by an occasional twisting of his tail by Wohlforth who had actually achieved junior partner status after the rupture with the French made the Workers League a correspondingly larger component of the IC operation. But it is likely that Wohlforth's wholesale destruction of the Workers League cadre was a prime mover in the process, and thus Wohlforth is a victim primarily of his own gratuitous organizational brutality.

The prognosis for the Workers League is not good. The comparison of statistics Wohlforth adduces to document its decline is unreliable since the earlier counts were originally concocted with Wohlforth's well-known proclivity for mendacious multiplication, but it is obvious that the Workers League membership is shrinking. Healy/Mazelis' efforts to win back the separated brethren will have at best

limited success, as the human material is badly damaged by its earlier experiences in Healyite "democratic centralism."

The new leadership is uninspired; even granting Mazelis a certain flair for legalistic stabbing-in-the-back, as demonstrated particularly at the 1966 London Conference (which Wohlforth sat out, sulking), he is so colorless as to be almost invisible. The disruption of the pecking order should continue to produce a lot of scrambling among ambitious WL cadres, among them David North, who figures prominently in the Wohlforth document. And the Healy organization in Britain has itself recently suffered a serious blow with the reported departure of some 200 members around one Alan Thornett.

### No Tears for Wohlforth

As for Wohlforth, we can say with sincerity: it couldn't happen to a nicer guy. Wohlforth has spent twelve years masquerading as a Trotskyist and helping Healy to do the same, in the process politically destroying whatever serious elements from among militant minority-group youth his organization has encountered, repelling most of them, convincing them that "socialism" is just another con game whose purpose is their manipulation, and converting a few into cynical fellow operators.

Wohlforth's greatest crime—in which he was abetted by Healy and Art Phillips—was that, in pursuit of supreme authority for himself and shortcuts to influence and numbers, he broke up the left wing within the SWP in the 1961-62 period. He split the opposition to the SWP's sharp right turn, cut it off from the possibility of winning valuable comrades from a section of the old-time SWP membership, set up our tendency for expulsion from the SWP in a situation of weakness and isolation which almost destroyed us, certainly setting us back a number of years. No amount of new-found empirical "wis-

dom" on Wohlforth's part can undo the enormous objective service he rendered the Pabloists at that crucial juncture, nor his continued service to them as foil and horrible example of what happens to those who break away to the "left."

But his ignominious departure from the Healyite fold at least accords us an opportunity to display to him a little piece of Wohlforthite viciousness. One of the practices at which Wohlforth excelled was the art of gratuitous denunciation. He always insisted that any individual leaving the Marxist movement for any reason must be denounced as a "renegade." In particular he waxed eloquent over a statement circulated internally within the Spartacist League in response to the resignation of Geoff White, formerly a founding leader of our tendency. Our statement replied to the evolved anti-Trotskyist political positions of White but also expressed recognition of his years of collaboration during which, recognizing his increasing political distance (the product in part of the demoralization engendered by Wohlforth's wrecking operations), he sought to train younger cadres to carry the movement forward.

Now Wohlforth has become, in his own terms as well as ours, a "renegade." With his usual pomposity, and lavish use of the imperial "we," Wohlforth pontificates:

"It is true we lost the skirmishes with the centrists but we won the theoretical fight at each point. We have left a priceless heritage in this theoretical struggle. This now passes on to the new generation of revolutionary fighters who face the big battles with the capitalist class itself."

Roughly translated, "I quit." And a final irony is that it was Geoff White who rendered the Marxist movement's verdict on Wohlforth when he remarked years ago, "Wohlforth is the living proof that crime does not pay." ■

—reprinted from *Workers Vanguard*  
No. 61, 31 January 1975