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practical, implement, return

The IS, The Revolutionary Party and Democratic Centralism

not return towards isolation,  
but toward centralization -

Revolutionary Continuity and the IS

The continuity of the revolutionary movement is the defense of its program, history and traditions. From the class struggle of the workers internationally the movement accumulates and generalizes experiences. Defeats and victories, little tactical lessons as well as profound world events. From these lessons the revolutionary Marxist program, the conscious expression of the class strivings of the proletariat, is refined, verified, or corrected.

Historic continuity, as all other aspects of Marxism, exists to serve a revolutionary purpose. To pass on to the new generation of proletarian revolutionists the experiences of the past without necessity for repeating old, costly errors. To train a cadre in the politics and tactics of revolutionary Marxism. To do so efficiently and rapidly, in tempo with the class struggle.

It is the distinction of the IS that it is the revolutionary group that has best performed the historic task of revolutionary continuity. We do not have to begin anew the construction of the theory and program of revolutionary Marxism, of the method to working class emancipation. This rich political capital has been passed on to us. We are the heirs of those pioneer generations of proletarian revolutionists upon whose work and ideas we stand.

Continuity in the Period of Counter-Revolution

It is the IS and its predecessors from the Trotskyist movement which best maintained revolutionary Marxism. But we did so in a period of counter-revolution, an era which was as prolonged as it was unanticipated. It was a period in which the Bolshevik tradition was almost destroyed by its class enemies, or so altered by its partisans as to make it almost unrecognizable. To keep alive the ideas of proletarian revolution and proletarian power we overcame enormous pressures to revise revolutionary Marxism. Not just from enemies but from friends--who made concessions, who trimmed it, who made it a more suitable doctrine to allow them to cross over the bridge to capitulation to Washington or Moscow.

To politically survive was no small achievement. We did so at enormous price. To maintain the Marxist program of the IS we fought isolation, struggles, faction fights. We lost many people. For years we were a small handful, whose intransigence was little compensation for our tiny size. From a movement, we were reduced to a sect. With all the subtle and not so subtle changes which occur in the politics of a class movement and party when it is reduced to sect proportions. We were cut off from the working class. There were no class correctives in practice to our theoretical work. We were confined to the margins of the middle class intellegentsia, not the best environment for the gestation of a workers" party. And this not for a year or a decade, but with some small exceptions for two generations.

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We maintained revolutionary Marxism in a period when it was impossible to build independent revolutionary parties, the only organizational form which gives Marxism

not for "politics", but for  
"tradition" is critical -

its real content. Naturally this affected our political practice, and over time, our political conceptions. Despite the best of efforts there was an inevitable degeneration. First of our class composition, then of our class program, methods, organization, and assumptions on how revolutionaries operate in the world.

### The Transition

Whatever faults we had, we maintained the healthy, revolutionary, proletarian core of Marxist politics. Yet we had faults. To apologize or to be ashamed for what was historically imposed upon us is ridiculous. To deny or ignore it, to cling to what reaction forces upon us, in a fundamentally different period, is conservative or sectarian. We must consciously overcome the assumptions developed in the period of counter-revolution.

We have for some years been in a transition, in a process of change. We have been wiping away the middle class and conservative incursions politically and organizationally which were the inevitable contradictions of the last period. We have been reshaping ourselves programmatically, organizationally, and in class composition for a new revolutionary period coming. We have done it slowly, painfully, incompletely. But we are doing it systematically and successfully. In the last period our essential task was the continuity of revolutionary Marxism. We made more than our share of mistakes and errors. But we were decisively sound, and successful. We accomplished the major achievement of that period, more so than any other revolutionary group. It is the IS which is the conscious bridge between the revolutionary past of the working class and its revolutionary future.

### From Sect to Combat Group

Objective conditions require that we make a change, the most important change required of a propaganda sect--the turn to mass work, to agitation and leadership. To transform a middle class intellectual group, with its norms, into a working class combat group with its norms. Without making any concession of intransigence in questions of political principle, to start the long term move of going from sect to building the nucleus of a party.

If we are optimistic about our ability to meet the test of moving from sect to workers combat group, it derives from our successful accomplishment of the past period, by the most favorable historical conditions at any time in the last 35 years, and in those steps which we have made in the last few years towards the working class and to tighter programmatic and organizational cohesion. We have sloughed off fetters on that development, even though it meant breaking with old comrades who could not make the first steps to revolutionary action within the broader labor movement. We have shown our willingness and our ability to transcend conservative, sectarian practices and perspectives of the past.

### Objective Conditions

We are only able to project these new tasks because of the profound change in world conditions. Without the objective conditions which ~~may~~ make possible the construction of independent revolutionary parties, the attempt to do so must end in demoralizing failure. The attempt of groups in the 50s at the height of the counter-revolution, to present themselves as embryonic revolutionary parties was disorienting,

isolating, and politically destructive to surviving cadres. To maintain the perspectives of the 1930s ~~and~~ 1950s was to turn Marxism into a sterile orthodoxy. It led to political pretence, self-delusion, and a tendency to substitutionism. We carefully guarded against such disorienting fantasies, even if in doing so we made ~~x~~ concessions to an overly modest conception of our role in the working class, and to deviations towards spontaneism. But to perpetuate the perspectives of the 50s, or even the 60s into the crisis of the 70s would <sup>and</sup> be as profoundly self-defeating as the opposite error. It would be as sectarian, destructive to the cadres which measures itself by the tasks of the objective period, and would find itself wanting.

Our point of departure is real conditions. Today all of the objective pre-conditions for successful proletarian revolution are developing internationally. This is not the place to restate our analysis of the capitalist crisis. We have analytical documents on the crisis, its international and domestic consequences, whose predictive character have been confirmed by subsequent events. We have stated from ~~it~~ before the beginning of this depression that unemployment would go to 10%, that the recovery would leave us with mass unemployment, that the next boom will be shallow, short-lived and highly inflationary, to be followed by another bust which will be more severe than the current depression. The capitalist economic instability, the rot at the underpinnings of world economy is producing political instability, turns and crisis.

The conditions for proletarian revolution do not yet exist. Yet they are rapidly maturing in Southern Europe (Spain, Italy, Greece) and in Britain. They will take longer to develop in the stronger, more economically and socially intact, more politically backward U. S. Fortunately we still have a lengthy preparatory period in which to develop the core of revolutionary parties. Unfortunately we are still lagging behind events, internationally as well as in the U.S. The gap between objective conditions and the subjective factor has widened. In Portugal it is probably already too late--although it didn't have to be. In Portugal objective conditions have matured for revolution, the workers have revolutionary consciousness, power can be taken, but revolutionary leadership and organization are weak and inadequate. When all of the objective conditions exist, it is the subjective factor that becomes decisive.

#### Bolshevism--The Subjective Factor

Bolshevism is about the subjective factor, about the organization of the working class for revolution and power. The subjective plays an enormous role in our politics. Socialism, Bolshevism teaches is the destruction of the old state and the conscious rule of the workers based on soviet forms of democracy. The road to power requires a conscious proletarian revolution, to destroy the state and introduce the conscious rule of the workers. A successful proletarian revolution in turn requires the preceding organization of conscious proletarians into an organized revolutionary vanguard party. Each step of this causal chain is based on the consciousness of the workers--on the subjective factor. To be sure, being determines consciousness, consciousness grows out of objective conditions. Nonetheless, it is Bolshevism which places the greatest stress on the subjective factor--the consciousness of the workers, and the organizational means to transform and retain revolutionary class consciousness.

Bolshevism maintains that under specific historic circumstances, it is the subjective

factor which is decisive. The history of our movement teaches on lesson over and over again. When objective conditions for revolution are fully matured, success requires an already developed revolutionary party, created in years of struggle before the actual outbreak of the revolutionary crisis. The last preceding period of capitalist crisis from WW1 to WW2 ~~was~~ saw some dozens of revolutionary situations develop, and revolutionary upsurges in the working class from Italy, to Spain, to Hungary, to Germany and elsewhere. All of them failed because of the absence of politically experienced, revolutionary parties with mature leadership and a disciplined organization of the working class vanguard.

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At a minimum what is required is the skeleton of a revolutionary party be prepared when the the revolutionary crisis opens up. For when a crisis develops, it is possible for a small revolutionary group, which is programatically cohesive, and tightly organized, to develop very rapidly if it has built roots and a credible alternative in the working class. So the Bolsheviks went in 1917 from 20,000 in February to 240,000 in October. In Spain in the 30s, the Cp went from 1000 in 1934 to over 100,000 in 1936, and and to a decisive role in the Civil War. In Portugal last March the Cp had 2 to 3 thousand members in an underground cadre organization, the only party with a base in the working class. Today they have over 100,000 members, are the leading political force in Portugal, on the verge of power. Meanwhile nine Maoist and two Trotskyist sects compete and fragment the revolutionary current in the proletarian vanguard.

If in revolutionary periods, the subjective factor becomes decisive, the key is the preceding stages of party building, in conditions which allow for it, but which are not the actual revolutionary crisis itself. Such is the period we are in. It is not a period of revolutionary crisis. Nor is it a period of such profound reaction that independent revolutionary parties are on the wane or can't be built. Rather it is a preparatory period, a period of party building when parties can add are being built. This is the actual course of development internationally. Not to anticipate it, and to politically and organizationally act on the conclusions of preparing for it is a political disaster, the consequences of which will be felt for decades thereafter. The struggle for the subjective factor, the struggle for influence and roots within the proletarian vanguard has ~~is~~ already begun. Slowly but surely, the working class is developing a layer of militants--of future leaders. While small in numbers and still a molecular process, the winning of these militants to revolutionary consciousness and organization is the basis for our perspective and activity. ~~88~~\*(Last part of paragraph omitted in typing. See end of

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document.)

One fetter on our development is our past conceptions of our role in the construction of a revolutionary party. In a period in which revolutionary parties could not be built we correctly stressed that at some future point the class struggle would create one. We would be one of the tendencies going into a revolutionary party, which would take in ~~many~~ groups which until then were organized in tendency formation. Such views saved us from giving up on the revolutionary party in a period in which there was no concrete perspectives on how it would be created. It also saved us from sectarian pretence. Its contradictions were a tendency toward spontaneist conceptions of the rise of a revolutionary party, and the downgrading of the role that any tendency, or sect (no matter how correct its views and strategies were) would play in building the party. Events have shown the incorrectness of these

views. Revolutionary parties today are being built by groups which were once sects, and not decisively on the questions which once divided the revolutionary movement in its propaganda sect stage (nature of the Russian state, China, etc.) but on questions of strategy and tactics within the broad labor movement. The spontaneous factor, the class motion of the workers, exists in much of Europe. What is now occurring is the conscious factor, the creation by the workers of their revolutionary party. This is being accomplished through the instrument of using one of the existing revolutionary cadre groups which have correct perspectives on the life, struggle and mass organizations of the workers.

It is our British comrades who have most proved that in this period parties are not arising from splits in already existing mass organizations, or through some spontaneist mystique or through awaiting a mass movement. They are developing from previously existing propaganda sects which have successfully oriented themselves to patient activity in the labor movement.

The IS GB has created the central political core around which the workers will construct their revolutionary party. There will be many stages and turns in that party's construction which includes the possibility of entrism, mass splits, fusions, etc. Nonetheless, its core has been created by what was previously one tendency group among many. This tendency viewed the construction of the party as a strategic task which its correct policies and activity required. It was capable of overcoming its sectarian past and turning to mass activity and agitation.

The IS GB has created all the elements for a revolutionary party. It has programmatic cohesion, tight organization, leadership, cadres, worker leaders, roots in the factories, trade union fractions, rank and file groups and strategies, a workers' press, a quality theoretical journal, and organized work (and papers) among blacks, women and students. The British IS has succeeded in this period in creating what is decisive in the next period. It has shown that it is possible to move from sect to the embryo of a party. We must organize ourselves in the way which can accomplish the same results.

Either we will construct a party around the program of revolutionary Marxism which we kept alive in the last period, or the working class will not emancipate itself in the coming decades. We say this without sectarianism or bravado and pretence. A party does not arise spontaneously. It is a task which an organized group of revolutionaries with correct perspectives, organization, program, and ties to the masses achieves over a period of decades under favorable historical circumstances.

We do not believe that some other group will do it. We see no other substantial group which stands on the program of Bolshevism, of working class democracy, of proletarian consciousness and proletarian power. Either we will do it, or it will not be done. Our fight for influence within the proletarian vanguard must be from this vantage point. If some other group develops an equal, or even good claim to lead the fight for socialism, we will propose collaboration, with the hope of achieving unity. We stand on no organizational or personal sectarianism. We will try to achieve those forces capable of overcoming the sectarianism of the past and helping to create a mass revolutionary workers party.

*unity on possible programmatic agreement with (insert)*  
The IS must free itself from the vestiges of the sectarianism of the past. We are

not a group organized on a deviant Trotskyist explanation of the degeneration of the Russian Revolution competing with other tendencies for ideological leadership within the Trotskyist movement. We are not one "brand of socialism" competing among many. We are the embodiment of authentic revolutionary Marxism, organized on its program of working class emancipation. This is our most powerful asset. It is what places upon us responsibilities and tasks which we did not necessarily seek out. Neither can we abnegate or hide from responsibilities which may be imposed upon us by our historical mission. It is this which impels us to organize ourselves, and our work, around the historic tasks of this period, the organization of a proletarian, revolutionary party.

#### Other Organizational Forms

Organizational concepts serve political purposes. Revolutionary and all other political parties are organized around their class, political goals. Social Democratic Parties are politically amorphous. They have no coherent program that their members accept, and are disciplined to. Projecting themselves as the party of the whole working class, they are based on the lowest common political denominator. Social Democratic Political conceptions are of parliamentary reform. Therefore they look for as large an electoral base as possible, one that is a passive support.

They have lots of political disagreement internally, and a loose organizational structure. For such a party little real discipline is necessary. Things are kept open and loose to contain all the differences of its passive electoral base. It does not turn that support into an active combat group. It does not try to change the working class, because it has no intention of changing society.

Decisions are not made by the passive base, despite the illusions of democratic looseness, but are decided on top. Resting upon backward layers of the working class, it reflects the class interests of the trade union bureaucracy, acting as agents of capitalism within the working class. Social Democratic parties never organize fractions and rank and file oppositions in unions, they are the political expression of the class interests of the bureaucracy. They spread the illusions in the working class that capitalist societies are democratic, open to socialist reform without the necessity for the hardships and rigor of revolution.

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Nowhere has any social democratic party engaged in revolutionary activity against capitalism. Full of illusions about the capitalist state, they have never organized themselves in a manner to withstand the repression and brutality of capitalist society. The organizational collapse of the Chilean SP in the face of the junta is only the latest example of one aspect of a "left" social democratic party; the swing of the Portuguese SP from "left" to support of capitalism (with Chile's Altamirano campaigning for them), is another variant on an old theme.

Stalinist parties, by contrast, do have programmatic agreement, tight organization, and discipline. They give the illusion of proletarian revolution and proletarian rule. In content they are however, parties of the bureaucratic apparatus. In class terms, they represent a new bureaucratic class based on state property, and and the bureaucracy's monopoly control of the state, of all economic and political power. Ideologically they justify this on the pretext that the bureaucracy serves

the masses, by preventing the workers from getting anywhere near the real levers of power to be able to serve themselves. No workers' democracy, control, soviets, etc. are allowed. The party (really the bureaucracy, as no factions or democracy is allowed in these bureaucratic parties) rules in the name of the working class.

The workers, Stalinism maintains, are too uneducated to rule society themselves, hence the justification for the rule of the bureaucracy. The tight control of Stalinist parties is as directed internally to its own ranks, as much as externally. As parties opposed to capitalism they maintain a politicized worker membership. But one which the bureaucracy must not allow to get out of control, to engage in revolutionary self-activity, to develop concepts of a working class for itself free of the tutelage of the bureaucracy. Hence the monolithism, the necessity for the lack of internal democracy, to protect the rule of the bureaucratic apparatus.

### Leninist Parties

Modern revolutionary proletarian parties were first created by the Bolsheviks and the Communist International under Lenin's leadership. What determines their organizational conceptions is their class goals, the self-emancipation of the working class. The workers can raise themselves to position of ruling class, can introduce their class dictatorship, the proletarian ~~dictatorship~~ dictatorship, in no other way than through democratic, collective conscious control. Socialism is the organization of the working class as the state power. The workers have to be organized and mobilized for this. Their consciousness developed so that they are aware of their position in society, their historic mission to liberate humanity through the creation of a classless society, and of the road to power.

*Class Power*

The only way in which the workers can come to power is through the destruction of the old state apparatus. The state machine of police, army, courts and bureaucracy which exists as an instrument of repression and of bureaucratic rule over the workers. A new state based on workers councils, with the working class organized as the state power must be created. Workers must make and enforce the laws, be armed to enforce their rule with no repressive apparatus above them. The basis for privileged bureaucracy has to be destroyed by all officials being elected, recallable, and none making more than a worker. This proletarian dictatorship can only be achieved through conscious revolution, through armed insurrection, through a revolutionary upheaval from below in which the enormous energy and creativity of the masses of workers is untapped, and is organized into effective instruments for revolution and rule.

Revolution requires a tightly knit, well-organized, disciplined party to lead masses of workers in the final assault on the repressive brutality of the capitalist state. But that repression is not just used on the day of the insurrection. It is an ever present fact of life. In VietNam, American imperialism used the most barbaric methods to maintain its hold on a country where its interests were marginal. It will be prepared to defend itself in its home territory, where its economy, power, privileges are concentrated by even more deadly means. Already, even in periods of social peace, it has an immense police state apparatus, a secret police, the CIA, and The FBI, which subverts workers and revolutionary organizations, spying on people, attempts to disrupt the movement, openly plots assassinations of political opponents, and murders individual militants or leadership groups such as the Black Panther Party.

Whoever goes into revolutionary opposition to American capitalism must be prepared to come up against the well-organized, technologically proficient, professional repression of the state. Whoever asks workers to follow them into revolutionary struggle must be prepared to take the consequences which we know are a part of the struggle. We must be as well-organized, centralized, disciplined and professional in our behavior and structure as our enemies are. Whoever objects to this either has illusions about bourgeois democracy, is incompetent, or doesn't really believe in the possibility of revolution or a revolutionary organization capable of withstanding capitalist repression.

We must be capable of building an organization which can fight not just in good times. Anyone can withstand success. We must be strong enough to withstand repression, not to be victimized and destroyed like the Panthers. Otherwise we are doomed to futility, and to turning socialism into a humanist creed, not a strategy for revolutionary working class self-emancipation. It is the goal of proletarian power, the conquest of state power, which is what determines the nature of organizing and preparing the proletariat for power, the norms of the Leninist party.

#### The Conscious Vanguard

Socialism is the conscious rule of the workers, but there is a contradiction in this. Working class consciousness is uneven. Revolutionaries are a minority (today a tiny one) within the working class and will be until the eve of insurrection. When we become a majority we will use it for revolutionary conquest. While the entire working class will rule, through its class institutions (soviets, unions, factory committees, etc.), it can only rule if a revolutionary leadership wins hegemony in these class institutions. The Leninist resolution of this contradiction is that the most advanced, conscious, revolutionary elements of the working class must be organized separately as an independent party. They must organize as a vanguard for the rest of the class. They must engage the more backward layers in struggle, and find the bridges from their current consciousness to winning them to the consciousness and leadership of the revolutionaries.

The Leninist conception of the vanguard starts from the backwardness of working class consciousness, from the recognition that without the conscious intervention of the revolutionaries, capitalist ideology (including all its ugly aspects, sexism, racism, etc.) is daily reproduced by the bourgeoisie in the subject class. Leninism rejects both static views of the consciousness of the workers. Those who bow to the existing level of the workers, because they have no confidence in future, higher levels. They glorify spontaneity since they have no confidence in winning workers to revolutionary political consciousness through ideological combat. Leninism also rejects those who deny the revolutionary potential of the working class because of its current backward and reactionary views.

Leninism recognizes the dialectical nature of consciousness, its ability to change and to make leaps. We know that we ourselves once held the ideas which today subjugate the workers. The workers must become fit to rule society, but so long as they accept capitalist ideology they are incapable of freeing themselves of ruling. To become fit to rule, to achieve their class goals, the workers must be educated through struggle, organizations, and the conscious intervention of their most self-sacrificing, advanced class leaders. The Leninist theory of the

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vanguard party starts from the necessity of the advanced revolutionaries organizing themselves independently of backward elements of the class. Not for the party to substitute for the class, but to win it through combat, in ideological struggle and by joining in every daily struggle which the workers enter with their current consciousness. The Leninist theory of the party is the theory of the organization of the vanguard. It is the working out of the program, tactics, and organizational bridges to win the working class to the leadership of its conscious expression, its vanguard.

### Democratic Centralism

The Leninist vanguard is organized around two axes, consciousness and power. As a revolutionary minority we are organized to give combat within the mass organizations of the workers, and to meet the centralized, disciplined power of the state, employers, and union bureaucrats with a professional, organized machine of a centralized, disciplined character. These unique goals determine the unique form of organization of a revolutionary group, democratic centralism.

There is no written handbook, or guide, to the principles or rules of democratic centralism. Nor can there be. Like all dialectical conceptions, its truths are concrete. What is democratic centralism in one set of concrete circumstances can be its opposite in another set of circumstances. Correct disciplined activity can only be justified by the correctness of the policies, not by a rule book. The amount of discipline depends on circumstances, timing, the relationship between the leadership and the ranks, etc. Commands in a situation when we enter combat, to a situation of totally free discussion without any immediate action are both aspects of democratic centralism. A loose patient attitude towards new members, while tighter discipline is required from older comrades charged with the political integration of the new. Democratic centralism requires different things of different individuals at different times. But it calls for an expanding conception of responsibility and discipline with an expansion of consciousness. Without attempting to discuss the use of democratic centralism at different times, we can discuss its conception, and its application to some of our current practice.

### Freedom of Criticism

Revolutionary parties are the most democratic of all organizations. Our democracy exists, and is judged not by an abstraction, a moral imperative, or a preference. These are all weak grounds for the continuation of democracy. Our democracy is a part of our material, class goals, the rule of the workers, which cannot exist in the long run without democratic control. The role of the party is to lead the workers to power. It is also to train and fit the workers to rule society, or rather to train the conscious minority, for all classes rule through their politically conscious elements. The party educates and trains workers in politics, decision making, and leadership. The role which the university performs for the bourgeoisie, the training and selecting of cadres, leaders and rulers, is performed for the working class by the revolutionary party.

Leninist democracy is an activist, anti-elitist conception. Against the political passivity of capitalism, with decision making from above, it trains from below, creating a conscious, educated strata of workers able to provide leadership for their class and to run society on a conscious basis. This education is not of

passive contemplation, but of active intervention in the class struggle. It is anti-elitist, in that all are trained to make political decisions, and are required to give as much leadership potential as they are capable of. The party attempts to constantly expand the consciousness and leadership of the members.

To run society, the workers must be able to run their own party. The fullest internal democracy, the prizing and defense of democratic control, the protection of minority rights, the fullest freedom of internal criticism, enables the training of the vanguard for conscious, ~~xxx~~ disciplined activity. To run their own parties, the ranks have the right to form factions, a right usually not allowed in social democratic, Stalinist or other parties. (The leadership in every party always organizes to extend its views.) The right to factions is the right of the ranks to organize for their views and control. The right to form factions does not mean the encouragement of factionalism or of factions, particularly permanent factions which are either cliques, or possibly the basis for different organizations. The contradiction in the right to form factions is overcome, like the right to self-determination, not by banning these democratic rights, but through a political policy designed to overcome the necessity for their exercise.

Within our ranks there is general, perhaps universal, acceptance of the conceptions of democratic centralism. What is controversial, and at times resisted, is the attempt to put it into practice now, coupled with lingering political fears of centralism. This comes out of our past, which had more the character of a discussion group than of a workers' combat group. Our job was to hold together. Action or timing which might upset the members or make waves were more important criteria than the tempo of development externally.

We were forced to exist on the margins of the intelligentsia. Of course, we made adaptations to our social milieu, that of a stratum whose overweening characteristic is its inability to ever organize itself for collective action. The intelligentsia is perennially incapable of action because it allows its personal ideas, and its continuous rediscussion of its ever changing ideas, to divide it against effective discipline. Not to constantly fight to overcome this background is to succumb to its pressures.

Nor have the traditions of American radicalism helped. The size of the country, its traditions shared by the working class, the level of working class consciousness on such questions as localism, fearfulness of centralism, bureaucracy, etc., have all militated against tightly centralized and professional revolutionary organization. Our own development, as it had to be at the time, was as a group that came out of a federation of local groups, each with its own leaderships, policies, methods of functioning, and resistance to national centralization. Even when we adopted steps toward democratic centralism, it was based in reality on tremendous local autonomy. Suspicion of centralism existed because of suspicion of the politics and leadership of the national organization. (Lack of confidence in the leadership means lack of confidence in the organization, and ultimately in the politics of the group.) It precludes democratic, disciplined centralism. This was begun to be overcome by our being welded together as a national organization

through the process of internal struggle in 1969-73. Of necessity there still lingers on assumptions from a past which we have outgrown. These assumptions are given up only reluctantly, the way old problems always are. Yet a slow temporizing tempo in overcoming them can in this period only lead to disastrous consequences.

### Centralism

The current period demands the speediest moves to tight centralization. We must complete the process of becoming one national organization with one national line. We must be capable of growing rapidly, of assimilating groups, and creating branches which are replicas of the national organization. This requires organization from a center. This can now be achieved because we have a political center, a centralized leadership for the group. It demands that the national line be carried everywhere, in all of the branches.

There is no democracy without this centralism, without the responsibly implemented decisions which are made on a national basis by conventions or democratically elected and responsible leading bodies. The EC and the NC must be required to intervene in the branches to ensure that the decisions of the group are being implemented in action. The leading bodies must not be allowed to temporize or to shirk their responsibility as elected representatives charged to ensure that the decisions of the organization are being carried out nationally. National implementation is the basis for successful intervention.

We cannot tolerate the situation in which comrades in one city enter industry and organize a rank and file group on the expectation of national fractions and national rank and file groups. In another city, crucial to the success of the perspective, industrialization takes years or never gets off the ground because the local leadership does not campaign and fight for it. In a third city the comrades who enter industry do not have their activity given the support it should; the branch continues to revolve around its previous life as an intellectual group since the workers are in a minority. In a fourth city the workers are allowed to stagnate. They do not build a rank and file group because they are not given the lead by the local exec. Such in truth is often common occurrence in an IS which is not centralized to ~~xx~~ carry out a single line.

Democratic centralism requires not just the same abstract line in all four cities--rank and file group, opposition to bureaucracy, etc.--but its implementation in practice. In each city the branch must be organized around the line being carried out, be judged by its success in carrying it out, not by excuses or alternative perspectives on why it has not carried out the national line. To ensure this implementation requires organization and intervention from the national center, the centralization of our activity.

Campaigns of the organization, from CLUW, to the independent left, to unemployment are ignored by some branches, or so changed by others as to be unrecognizable. While in a country of our size and diversity, local considerations have to be taken into account, they cannot become the occasion to so transform the campaign as to make it inapplicable or not "designed for our local needs." Such thinking is part of our parochial past, when "local considerations" kept us out of the SDS. Local considerations destroyed a national perspective.



leadership built in struggle - not invited - at this  
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mutual collaborative leadership -

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whoever has the ability and opportunity to write. It reflects the line of the whole organization, including those of its members who because of circumstances, talent, or the division of labor, do not write the articles. In this respect it has overcome the petty bourgeois conceptions it had when it first began--that WP is an expression of the personal talents and views of those who write for it, that it is the vehicle for their <sup>personal expression</sup> advancements. WP has also long outgrown the new leftism, the distrust of centralized leadership and a combat organization, which constitutionally required that Workers Power be a discussion bulletin for a group of contending tendencies. The constitution should be altered to reflect the reality of what Workers Power has become and should be, to overcome the ambiguity which allows comrades to believe they have the right to publish whatever they want in WP under the heading of discussion articles. Workers Power is a democratic centralist line publication. It only publishes discussion or minority articles on those rare occasions when we open our internal debate to the public.

#### Against Abstention

A democratic centralist organization cannot tolerate a general policy of abstentions, by branches or individuals, of those who disagree with the national line. We understand that those who disagree are sometimes not the best advocates of a particular policy if they lack conviction of its correctness. Nonetheless, without any bow to monolithism, we expect that as much as possible comrades will defend the line and integrity of the group, attempting to win people to it, because of the high level of shared politics in the group.]

We have always required that the public representatives of the group must always defend the group's line, no matter what their private convictions. They are not just individuals, but representatives who owe their positions, external as well as internal, to the collaborative work of all the comrades, to whom they are responsible. We have chosen our public spokespeople on their ability to present our views as a group, and not necessarily on their own private views. Our leaders are elected on overall questions and ability. They cannot be allowed to abstain on individual questions, or we have wasted the resources of the entire group on that question. Having developed public spokespeople it would be intolerable for us to allow them to give a different line or to abstain on particular questions. For example, an officer of the group speaking in public giving a different line on a question such as womens' liberation, CLUW, Etc.

The group would then be the property of its officers, not its ranks. Such is the case in social democratic groups. Norman Thomas, spokesperson for the SE, identified with it in the public mind, would always present his own, not the party views, even though the former would be taken for the latter.

This conception we developed when we were still primarily an intellectual discussion group. Now that we are becoming a workers combat group, it must be amended. In a vanguard group all are representatives of the group. All are being trained to be leaders in their shops and for other mass work. There is a division of labor, in which what one individual is doing in one area only occurs because of the collaborative activity of other comrades in other

areas, who are assigned to other work.

We are mutually responsible for each others work, and our work is fruitful only because of what others are doing. We are not just spokespeople for ourselves, ~~but for the whole~~ group. As such we, the cadres and ranks of the organization, not just the officers, have to defend the views of the group without the luxury of abstaining.

We cannot allow a situation in which we function as a disciplined group in fraction work, pushing particular people for trade union roles on the basis of the work of the whole group, as a daily part of our activity, and still maintain the old conception. (The activist, anti-elitist conception of a combat group requires the same responsibility from the ranks as from the leadership, the end of the policy of abstention by members or by branches.) In the future the only exception will be that when a member has profound opposition to an important policy or theory of the group, they may apply for and generally will be granted permission not to appear as the public advocate of the policy or theory in question.

### Leadership

Joint action requires leadership under all circumstances. The organization of a vanguard group around democratic centralism is to provide leadership in the class struggle. The group exists for external combat. Its job is to train its members to provide leadership, to be able to fight and contend for leadership externally. To be active aggressive fighters for the group's program and activities

Internally, it is the leadership of the group that is charged with the execution of this, with leading, with training and selecting cadres for external leadership, with creating an effective division of labor so that the whole organization becomes the machinery for revolution. Consciousness within the revolutionary organization is also uneven. (We do not pick a leadership to reflect the ranks, the unevenness of consciousness... Rather we select out the most advanced, conscious elements, to lead, to constantly raise the consciousness of the ranks toward its own level, to take the organization through the turns required of it, to provide its future and direction.)

In a centralized, highly disciplined organization there must be a high degree of confidence in the leadership. This confidence cannot be based on command, sycophancy, or need for loyalty, but on a leadership which has proven itself, which stands upon correct policies, perspectives, and activities. Otherwise there is no real confidence in the organization or in its politics. The leadership must be selected for what it accomplishes in practice, not just for how well it talks, but what conclusions it has to show for its talk.

The most advanced and competent leaders should be selected to be trained to provide competent, professional service for the group. We demand of our leaders that they devote their lives to the cause of the revolutionary workers. Revolution

for them should be a profession, not a hobby, nor should they be qualified by attempts to achieve careers under capitalism. Revolutionary leadership is a fulltime commitment. Naturally, we consider workers politically active in industry to be full time revolutionaries. The NC should be composed only of those who are prepared to put themselves full time at the service of the group. It is not necessary or even desirable that all NC members should be working full time for the group. But all of them should, as an obligation of office, be prepared to work full time for the group if so decided by the NC.

The development of a staff of professional revolutionists requires in turn from the group new responsibilities. We do not have the social democratic conception that the staff are servants and coolies. That the political leaders are those who develop their careers in the bourgeois world and don't dirty themselves with the day-to-day work of leading and running the organization. For us, the highest calling is that of professional revolutionary. It requires developing the consciousness in the group that the most advanced, self-sacrificing elements should be selected out for this, and encouraged to devote their lives to the revolutionary organization.

It opens the possibility of developing a professional staff to overcome our still primitive and inefficient methods. It means a respect, valuing, and nurturing of a professionally developed staff. This will only occur as the staff proves itself through hard work and success. However it does mean overcoming, and fighting the tendencies which still linger in the group of disrespect for manual labor, of an intellectual sneering contempt for those who do the unglamorous daily work of the organization, of the petty bourgeois mentality which calls such manual labor "shit work" and views such unglamorous labor for the group as an onerous chore to be avoided, not to be valued as a contribution to revolutionary activity.

To create a national staff, comrades should be periodically moved from one branch to another. Their loyalties are to a national, not local, organization. Although this must be balanced against the roots people develop, which cannot be moved with them, neither should the cadres be allowed to get into routinism and not continue their development. In particular, promising comrades should be moved from the branches to the center, to bring in new political experiences, talents, and ties with the branches. Comrades trained at the center must be moved to the branches, to bring the most advanced expression of the national politics into the branches and for their own realization of leadership potential. Secondary leaders at the center often become the best primary leaders in the branches.

✓ ~~Organizers are to be a part of a national staff. Their success or failure is not a local matter, but a part of the responsibility of the center leadership, just as much as the success of the local branches is in the final analysis the responsibility of the center. The organizers should be appointed by the EC in consultation with the branch. They should be funded nationally. They should be responsible for carrying the national line in the branches. They should be moved to different branches as the necessity arises.~~

Stability is a necessity in developing a leadership with political judgment, skill, and a proper division of labor. But the creation of a national, pro-

Professional leadership and staff cannot be allowed to lead to a bureaucratic ossification or conservatization. The leadership must be constantly renewable, drawing in new, dynamic members, open to new experiences, to the turns the group must go through.

Leadership must allow room for people being changed in their roles. But those who are not performing cannot be allowed to hold back the organization based on past services rendered. Leadership is not accumulated like seniority, nor are there to be any sinecures in the leadership.

In the IS today, with its coming rapid expansion, change in social composition and in functioning, the organization should guard against any attempt to develop an "old boys" network which is an obstacle to the rise of new leaders. The IS can congratulate itself on having over the last few years overcome the conservatism and discrimination of the left and developed a leadership which includes women at all levels. We have shown we can do it. We must now maintain an openness and willingness to change, so that a black and working class leadership is rapidly developed for the group--even if this means changing the EC, NC, execs, and fraction leaderships rapidly.

*Parker  
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Democratic centralism does not mean that the leadership of the group is confined to the EC of the NC. The tasks of the IS in building a party and providing leadership in the class struggle require the development of a large leadership cadre and the broadest diffusion of responsibility, leadership and initiative internally. In particular, this requires the development of collaborative, self-confident leadership bodies in the branches and in the fractions. It is through the latter that a working class leadership will be built for the IS, and that successful intervention in the class will be organized. The contradiction between centralism and the broadest diffusion of responsibility and initiative to the fractions and branches can be resolved by a collaborative division of labor in the national cadre based on programmatic agreement and disciplined functioning.

Programmatic Agreement

Democratic centralism and leadership in a voluntary organization can only exist on the basis of voluntary consciousness. What brings us together as a group is our shared political program. What informs our discipline is our shared political goals. We are not monolithic. Individual differences on this or that part of our program are allowed. But the rigorous discipline of a revolutionary vanguard is based on the high level of agreement and consciousness of its ranks. — *how to bridge this agreement*

Therefore the necessity for programmatic seriousness, for serious debate of ideas and theory, for overcoming theoretical sloppiness as the only guide to informed, disciplined action. We take ideas and theoretical debate seriously because it will wind up in action. We require a high level of education, of constant education, because we have a high level of discipline, and because we are training our members for leadership.

We have learnt from bitter experience that recruitment to the organization can only be on the basis of agreement with our program. New members can only be recruited on agreement with our program. They may, as our members may, differ with individual points. But we are not willing to take in people with divergent views who want to change us. We want to change the world. The flexibility of our tactics depends on the firmness of our principles and we will only take in those who want to fight for our line externally.

We are not a multi-tendencied organization, leading to political incoherence, or being pulled in many different directions and cancelling each other out. The low point of this was our New York branch in 1973--composed of 4 "Trotskyist" factions which dissolved the branch in a stew of petty bourgeois sectarian discussion, with large losses in membership. Our difficulties in moving to democratic centralism in the period 1970-73, although lip service was paid to it, was that we lacked the programmatic agreement to produce disciplined activity, or even serious political development of ideas.

~~Our history has shown the truth of the Leninist maxim that without programmatic agreement there is no basis for disciplined collaboration. We reject fundamentally the view in our early constitution that there can be no discipline over ideas. The revolutionary organization cannot be open to any and all views. Views such as racism, sexism and counter-revolution are grounds for discipline and expulsion. Further, our past internal struggles showed we cannot survive as a grouping with fundamental differences on program. The expulsion of the RSL was, correctly, not for explicit overt acts, but mainly for views--especially that the IS was a centrist counter-revolutionary tendency whose politics must be destroyed--which could only lead to a systematic effort to wreck the IS.~~

### Recruitment

This does not in any way mean conservatism nor recruitment on the norms of an intellectual discussion group or sectarianism about recruitment. We should be as open and outgoing about recruitment as possible. We should place no obstacles to workers active in the class struggle joining the IS, on the basis of their activity--not on the basis of having gone through the curricula of a study group, or of selecting us as one political tendency among many in the movement, the way our recruitment among students in the 60s and the early 70s occurred. Workers who join us are doing so not to change us by talk about their own pet notions on points where they differ with us, as so many intellectuals want to, but to be more effective class fighters.

Indeed our perspective on the nature of the period and our own role demands in the next few years the rapid expansion of the IS, the recruitment of large numbers of working people, women, and national minorities, who have had little previous political experience. They will get the overwhelming bulk of their political training and education internally, not from non-existent movement organizations. The nature of this period is such that we can recruit large numbers of people with little movement or political background, who are prepared to join a revolutionary workers' organization much earlier and make a commitment to revolution much higher than that of the student recruitment of the 60s, even though the latter was on a higher level of abstract propaganda. They must be rapidly assimilated to become a cadre

"not the history, organization of  
all" -

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for the IS and its further growth as a workers' combat group.

The theory of a Leninist cadre group is precisely to be able to expand rapidly under favorable circumstances, and to have a cadre capable of assimilating new inexperienced people, and rapidly training them for leadership. The test of the IS in the next years is if we can accomplish this in much better fashion than the last rapid growth of students in 1969-70, with its resulting years of internal fights.

Our ability to do so rests on the agreement and self-discipline of our cadres, on whether they have the maturity to win the new members to the politics of the IS, and to being incorporated into the cadre, or whether we are more concerned with perpetuating a sect mentality based on internal dissatisfactions with the politics and leadership of the organization.

#### Collaboration

Given programmatic agreement, a role must be found for every individual who agrees with our program. Based on political agreement and discipline there must be a collaboration between the entire membership. In the past we did not find a role for many people. They were frozen out. There was a role for theoreticians, for debaters, for talkers, but often not for party activists, whose labor and devotion to the group was denigrated as "shit work." There was spread within the group the petty bourgeoisie's contempt for any labor that doesn't bring personal acclaim. It proved difficult for us to develop, with those attitudes, an effective machine of comrades selling newspapers, writing or distributing leaflets, collecting dues, being active in organization where there was little immediate excitement, etc.

We have to find a role for every individual which is prized by the group as necessary for our work, as a part of an organic whole, in which each part fits together to maximize our resources and effectiveness, to create an organizational machine. We can no longer tolerate organizers, execs, fractions, etc. which do not find a collaborative role for all of our members. Whoever agrees must be brought into collaboration in putting over our program, in being developed to provide leadership in combat, and to be advanced in the group as they successfully prove themselves.

The leadership, the cadres, the whole organization must be developed into a collaborative team, with a division of labor, so that we can draw upon the strengths and talents of our individual members. The division of labor can be changed, and comrades should be trained for more than one role. But not everyone can do all things at once, and in a competent, professional manner.

We choose people for different tasks on the basis of their successful accomplishments of them. We judge on the basis of results, not personal relations. We will find a role for everyone, and develop everyone's potential. We recognize that the work of all of our members is essential for the work of others. We can come to a rational division if we have programmatic agreement, are disciplined, and can collaborate together.



national committee must become such a collaborative team, bringing the perspectives of the branches and the fractions into the NC, developing a national line, and trying as a collaborative group to carry the organization as a whole for that national line. Its national division of labor is what will make the group increasingly effective as a combat organization, increasing the effectiveness of one section of the organization by similar work strengthening it in another section.

It is not just the NC, but an entire national cadre, the leaders of vbranches, fractions, Red Tide, and commissions, devoted to the politics of the group, which must be developed, which will struggle to create together, as a collaborative effort, a national organization, growing, expanding, accomplishingg its perspectives, carrying the line in the branches and fractions, educating the new members, and leading the organization in external combat.

Our line is designed for external combat. To have a group whose talents are devoted to convincing each other rather than the world is a waste. Our cadres must be internally self-disciplined, with a relationship to the organization similar to that of the organization's relationship to the class--providing leadership, raising consciousness, defending the line and the organization. The cadre must place their differences into context, so that they can overcome the many individual disagreements we all have, for common collaboration, Democratic centralism requires higher standards for the cadre. This is not a rule, but a political responsibility. The cadres must win the new members to the positions and leadership of the group, not confuse, demoralize, sow doubts. The cadre must move the newer and inexperienced people closer to us politically in terms of committment and drawing them into a democratic centralist collabofation, to an ~~open~~ open, expanding, inclusive cadre, to create a revolutionary vanguard party.

*historically too early for this direction from the  
top - Mutual help is 1910 project to make these decisions -*