

INTERNATIONAL INFORMATION BULLETIN

AUGUST 1963 -- I

INTERNATIONAL REPORT AT THE
TWENTIETH CONVENTION
OF THE
SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY

by

Joseph Hansen

35¢

--- Published by the

SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY

116 University Place New York 3, N. Y.

1963

Editor's Note

We publish herewith the "International Report at the Twentieth Convention of the Socialist Workers Party" by Joseph Hansen. Presented in the name of the Political Committee of the party, Comrade Hansen's report opened the convention deliberations in which the delegates adopted the following documents:

"For Early Reunification of the World Trotskyist Movement," Statement of the Political Committee of the SWP. (SWP Discussion Bulletin, Vol. 24, No. 9) Adopted by a vote of 60 for, 3 against.

"SWP Convention Resolution on the Reunification of the Fourth International." (The Militant, August 5, 1963, page 6, columns 4 and 5). Adopted by a vote of 60 for, 1 against and 2 abstentions.

INTERNATIONAL REPORT AT TWENTIETH CONVENTION

OF THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY

by Joseph Hansen

The reunification of the Fourth International after a split of some ten years duration constitutes a most encouraging victory for the world Trotskyist movement. It occurs as the world crisis of Stalinism reaches a new paroxysm and the split between Mao and Khrushchev appears beyond remedy, whatever diplomatic patching over of differences may occur in the coming period. The prospects for the growth of the Trotskyist movement are the best they have been in many years, with opportunities opening up on all sides, including the United States, as the upsurge in the Negro struggle portends.

The reunification occurred against formidable odds and difficulties, not the least being opposition from sectors of the Trotskyist movement itself. The achievement of reunification is a tribute to the patience, persistence and goodwill of the great majority of comrades on the side of both the International Secretariat and the International Committee. I am happy to report that out of the fusion has been born a new leading body -- the United Secretariat of the Fourth International.

The main events leading up to this success can be briefly indicated as follows:

The political issues in dispute in 1953-54, which led to the split, were felt by the majority of both sides to have been largely superseded by 1957. An effort was made at that time to achieve unity but this fell through due to misunderstandings, lingering suspicions, some sabotage, and a residue of important although secondary differences.

The two sides nevertheless continued to come closer together in political positions, notably in estimates of the importance of the colonial revolution, the de-Stalinization process, and especially in judgments of the significance and meaning of the Cuban Revolution. Under these circumstances the maintenance of the split became more and more untenable.

In the early part of last year, serious measures were initiated by both sides to achieve a principled reunification and this was aided by an organizational measure proposed by

leaders of the Socialist Labour League -- a Parity Committee. This proposal was accepted and the process of reunification went into high gear, although the leaders of the SLL made continual efforts to throw it into reverse.

One of the main problems was to define the principled basis for unification. This work was decisively promoted by the Political Committee of the Socialist Workers party in a statement "For Early Reunification of the World Trotskyist Movement." The document was accepted by the International Secretariat and also approved by a majority of sections of the International Committee. I believe that only the British and French sections have failed to take a stand on it. In fact, they seem to have decided to refuse even to discuss it.

The International Secretariat scheduled its Seventh World Congress for June of this year and both sides sought to utilize the occasion to test the feasibility of a Reunification Congress. Invitations were extended to all sections of the IC to send observers to the Seventh World Congress, a special invitation being extended to the Socialist Workers party which is not affiliated with any international organization due to reactionary legislation.

The leaders of the SLL, although in vigorous opposition to unification, accepted the invitation to send observers -- only to reverse their stand at the last moment and end up boycotting the Congress. This action was associated with their refusal to schedule a world conference of the IC on the eve of the IS gathering. When the majority of the IC scheduled a conference of its own, the leaders of the British and French sections turned down an invitation to join in converting it into a full IC conference. They also rejected invitations to send observers. It thus became necessary to proceed without them much to the regret of the majority of both sides.

The IC majority representatives held a conference on the eve of the IS congress where it was unanimously decided to attend the latter gathering as observers. Throughout the congress they held their own meetings between sessions to assess developments.

The IC majority representatives were very favorably impressed with the Seventh World Congress. Delegates were present from some twenty sections. Special difficulties prevented the attendance of representatives from Jamaica, Japan, Peru, South Africa and Soviet bloc countries.

The discussion was completely free and democratic. Two main tendencies were present, a majority headed by Pierre Frank, E. Germain and Livio Maitan; a minority by Michel Pablo. The differences between the two sides involved variant estimates of what force will prove decisive in ending the threat of nuclear war; the interrelationship between the colonial revolution and the proletarian revolution in the industrially advanced countries; the relative progressiveness of the two sides in the Sino-Soviet dispute; and, finally, the record of the outgoing leadership. The key document presented by Comrades Frank, Germain and Maitan received an eighty per cent majority.

The congress voted unanimously in favor of reunification on the basis of the statement adopted by the Political Committee of the SWP.

Both sides thereupon agreed that the conditions for a principled unification had been fulfilled and a Reunification Congress was held.

Four documents were moved for adoption: (1) "For Early Reunification of the World Trotskyist Movement," the statement by the Political Committee of the SWP; (2) "The Dynamics of World Revolution"; (3) "The Sino-Soviet Conflict and the Situation in the USSR and the Other Workers States"; (4) "The International Situation and Our Tasks."

You are familiar with the first document; it was published in Discussion Bulletin No. 9 (Vol. 24). The other three are not yet available. This is due to the fact that the National Office was completely swamped by documents submitted by the party membership. In a period of internal discussion, these of course take precedence over everything else. I will therefore say a few words about these three documents.

"The Dynamics of World Revolution" is a study of the dialectical interrelationship between the colonial revolution, the political revolution in the Soviet bloc countries and the proletarian revolution in the industrially advanced countries. It projects possible variants in this mighty process of world-wide upheaval and lays special stress on the key role of revolutionary-socialist parties and the historic importance of the Fourth International.

It is, in my opinion, a document of first-rate importance, one that will be especially appreciated by young comrades and those most keenly interested in recruiting to our ranks.

The document dealing with the Sino-Soviet conflict is a careful analysis of latest trends and developments in the Soviet bloc, particularly the Soviet Union. It decidedly endorses the Chinese side as the more progressive in the big dispute now rocking the Communist parties everywhere, but it makes no concessions to Maoism. It calls for mass struggle by the Chinese workers and peasants to institute proletarian democracy in the deformed Chinese workers state.

The final document "The International Situation and Our Tasks" deals quite concretely with current problems in key areas of the world with particular emphasis on lands where Trotskyists constitute a certain force as in Western Europe, Africa and Latin America. One of the areas of keenest interest is Algeria where the Revolution has recently made advances of great import. A big problem there -- and also a big opportunity for socialists in other countries -- is to help bring substantial aid as part of the effort to cut down the obstacles to swift development of the tendency toward socialism.

The Reunification Congress elected a leadership for the united organization, making provision for representatives from all IC sections on a basis proportional to membership.

You may have read a report about the Reunification Congress in the June 29 Newsletter. The report attacks the Congress and also the SWP. As is so often the case with this newspaper, its news is quite inaccurate. It is said, for instance, that the Canadian delegate committed his section to the reunited movement "without a decision of a national conference of his organization."

With equal lack of accuracy, the Newsletter adds the following charge: "Although the SWP have a national convention scheduled for the middle of July, they have not thought it necessary to consult their convention."

The fact is that the participants left the Reunification Congress open to ratification. The IC representatives present, with the exception of the Chinese delegation which was empowered to ratify at once, went no further than stating that they would report back to their organizations and recommend early ratification.

The Canadian comrades will take up the question at their convention later this month. Other sections of the IC, including those who were not directly represented, will consider ratification in due course.

The SWP, which cannot affiliate, can do no more than approve or disapprove the reunification of the world Trotskyist movement. This is the question now before you on this point on the agenda. You can discuss it as you please and then vote it up or down in accordance with the traditional democratic practice of the Socialist Workers party.

The Opposition to Unification

The advantages to be derived from unification are so obvious that it would seem self-evident that every serious and responsible member of the world Trotskyist movement would favor it and work for its consummation. Two groupings, however, have proved to be deeply hostile. One is the Posadas tendency in Latin America. This split-off from the IS has developed an ultra-left line that includes advocating that the Soviet Union should not hesitate to take the initiative in launching nuclear war. Anything less than this view is considered to be "centrist."

The other grouping is the International Committee minority headed by Gerry Healy. In 1957 when it became clear that the great majority of Trotskyists internationally held common political positions on the decisive current issues, it was our impression that the leaders of the SLL shared our view about the advisability of ending the split. While we were puzzled at some aberrant notes such as the opinion expressed in one article that the differences were deepening, we still thought that agreement existed between us and the SLL leadership on the objective need and feasibility of unification.

We now know that we were mistaken in this. The steps which we initiated in 1957 for unification were sabotaged by Gerry Healy. In fact he played us for suckers. We offer no apologies for being taken in. We operate on the principle of placing trust and confidence in the friends and comrades with whom we share the tasks of trying to build a revolutionary-socialist movement. Consequently it is always possible for someone who cares to play that kind of role to take advantage of us for a time. We do not intend to reform in this respect. We recognize that the law of the jungle prevails in bourgeois politics; but we think it would be self-defeating and disastrous to live by that law inside the Trotskyist movement. As Trotsky said, "Our party is not like other parties."

Healy managed to block unification in this devious and unprincipled way for a few years. His underhand maneuvering was facilitated by errors and misunderstandings on the side of the IS. Eventually, however, the similarity of political

positions on the two sides became so striking in the case of the Cuban Revolution that it was impossible to offer a rational explanation for continuation of the split.

The IS again went on record in favor of unification and we in the SWP initiated some fact-finding work to get a clearer picture of the actual relation of forces, the real views of both sides on unification and the level of good will or ill will which is such an important factor in building a durable unification.

Healy was thus faced with the perspective of new and more powerful moves for reunification of the world Trotskyist movement. Instead of bowing to the will of the majority, this bitter-end factionalist decided to continue to oppose it. But he needed stronger justification for such a course. This had to be of a political nature. In brief, he had to find political differences which he could advance as "good" if not real reasons for opposing unification.

He found these first of all in relation to the colonial revolution and especially Algeria and Cuba, the two revolutionary epicenters in which the IS and the SWP were deeply involved. He sought to construe the conclusions reached by the IS and the SWP in relation to these revolutions, especially the Cuban Revolution, into departures from Marxism.

While this facilitated Healy's course of keeping the SLL out of the reunification, it left him with the not small problem of explaining how the great majority of the world Trotskyist movement came to fall into such deviations from Marxism as he professes to see. His explanation was remarkable for its crudeness. The International Secretariat, he said, represented "revisionism." Having little other means to make this charge stick, he simply repeated the accusations levelled in the faction struggle of ten years ago. He repeated them in the most provocative way possible. But this game was completely transparent and caused little more than a shrug on either side.

Healy's explanation for the course of the SWP had a certain novelty. According to him the SWP has "degenerated." It has "capitulated to Pabloism" and ended up by "betraying Trotskyism." With such bizarre charges, Healy brought to an end the long years of fruitful collaboration between the SLL and the SWP.

We did everything in our power to avoid clashes, to ease tensions, to give Healy time to back out of his erroneous positions without the damage that could come to him and the SLL in a faction fight. All of this was interpreted as weakness on our part and an incapacity to meet him in "discussion." Finally Healy took the ultimate step of initiating a "split," for which, of course, he blamed the SWP.

If the SWP wanted to split with the SLL why have we so persistently pressed Healy to join in the reunification of the Fourth International? The offer still remains open to the SLL: join the reunified movement, unite with it. That will at once end the split.

Healy's answer to these comradely overtures is most curious. He views the offer as "this waving of the big stick of unity." Now isn't that an odd way to describe an open door and a welcome mat?

The ultra-left secretian policies to which the SLL has turned more and more in the past couple of years are no doubt related to Healy's efforts to block reunification. The SLL leadership, in order to justify resistance to reunification, is under compulsion to follow a line further to the left than the ones followed by the SWP and the IS and this puts the SLL way out -- but way out.

Comrades of the SWP have recently been provided with a striking example of this by the handling of the Negro struggle in the Newsletter. This is a field with which you happen to have some familiarity and so it is easy for you to make an independent judgement. The reactions of R. Vernon are no doubt typical. In his excellent contributions to the internal discussion, Comrade Vernon noted that the SLL displays "obtuseness and insensitivity to the importance and positive aspects of nationalism anywhere." "They present the aspect of stodgy British critics whose vision cannot extend beyond their own insular position in an advanced and highly industrialized country....In their factionally motivated comments on the Negro struggle in the U.S., they are simply ludicrous, and place a heavy burden on anyone claiming to be their co-thinkers."

That, in my opinion, is an accurate judgement that can well apply to the current politics of the SLL in just about every field in which they put their fingers.

Such is the unfortunate position to which blind factionalism and a narrow insular outlook led Gerry Healy. On the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the Fourth International, we find him deep in an error that is as bad if not worse than the one he committed in 1938 when he opposed the founding of the Fourth International.

In the face of charges which meant that Healy was drawing a class line between himself and the leadership of the SWP and the International Secretariat; that is, declaring war to the knife, he took an apparently illogical action. He initiated a "Parity Committee." Some comrades thought it was a maneuver -- something impermissible in a question as serious as the unification of the movement. But objectively the proposal was a good step toward unification. The International Secretariat therefore accepted it and the SWP approved it as a positive move in the right direction. When the SWP supported the Parity Committee, Healy accused us of engaging in a maneuver, but if anyone was maneuvering with the question of unity it was obviously Healy.

The Parity Committee facilitated reunification, helping to pave the way for the Reunification Congress. Healy, however, continued to oppose ending the split and his reaction to the Reunification Congress was a violent one. He opened up a public attack against it and against the SWP on the front page of the Newsletter and there is every indication that he intends to pursue this course, attacking the reunified Fourth International as an enemy organization.

It is, therefore, necessary to consider more closely the positions of this bitter opponent to reunification of the world Trotskyist movement, particularly since these positions have been adopted by a minority in the SWP who echo Healy's charges that the reunification represents a capitulation to "centrism"; that it signifies "liquidation" of the Leninist concept of the role of the party; that it constitutes evidence of the "degeneration" of the SWP; that it represents a "split" with the "true" Trotskyists who back the views of Gerry Healy and Cliff Slaughter.

A Dispute Over Methodology?

The essence of Healy's position is expressed in a document called "Opportunism and Empiricism." The Newsletter of June 29 refers to it, claiming on the front page that "although submitted almost three months ago to the SWP, it has not yet been published for the members of that organization."

This statement meets Healy's usual norms concerning facts. The copy received by the National Office of the SWP bore a London date of May 14, which is not exactly three months before June 29, the date on which Healy levelled his accusation of suppression. You will find the document among the latest numbers of that stack of thirty-seven (37) discussion bulletins bureaucratically "suppressed" by the national leadership since last January.

"Opportunism and Empiricism" is designed by Healy to serve as a bible for all who count themselves as "left of centrist Trotskyists" and unyielding opponents of reunification. I am sure that the two minorities in the SWP who admire Healy's anti-unity theories so much that they decided to put them into practice in their own faction will unite, if only temporarily, to celebrate its appearance in an American edition. Perhaps in honor of the occasion they will favor us with a quote or two to show how admirably each side can use it against the other to maintain their own split.

Marked by vitriolic subjectivity, "Opportunism and Empiricism" is nothing but an attorney's brief for the ultra-left sectarianism and dead-end factionalism that motivate Healy in his efforts to maintain the split in the world Trotskyist movement. It pretends to deepen the discussion, taking it to the level of philosophy. But this is a bare-faced fraud.

In a document which I wrote last fall "Cuba -- the Acid Test," I responded to an attempt by Cliff Slaughter to brand as "empiricism" the concern of the SWP for the facts in the Cuban Revolution. Taking Slaughter seriously, I sought to point out that Marxism does not quarrel with empiricism insofar as both start with facts; its quarrel with empiricism lies in the method of assessing and relating facts. I stressed that as a materialist philosophy, dialectical materialism must begin with the outside world and not with notions or concepts in our own heads. In this, Marxism differs from all idealist schools, including the Hegelian.

To make absolutely certain that no one misunderstands my meaning, let me refer to Trotsky's introduction to the first edition of Harold R. Isaacs' The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution. In this introduction, Trotsky explains the weaknesses of empiricism and indicates the material causes for the "obstinacy of Anglo-Saxon pragmatism and its hostility to dialectical thinking." He praises Isaacs for proceeding from the Marxist point of view. But he declares quite flatly that "the mere fact that the author of this book belongs to the

school of historical materialism would be entirely insufficient in our eyes to win approval for his work." Stalinism, Trotsky points out, has debased Marxism. "From an instrument of analysis and criticism, it has been turned into an instrument of cheap apologetics. Instead of analyzing facts, it occupies itself with selecting sophisms in the interests of exalted clients." Trotsky flays the Stalinist writers who subordinate "to each zigzag facts as well as general treatment." And he draws the following vivid analogy: "Just as a surgeon, on whose scalpel a human life depends, distinguishes with extreme care between the various tissues of an organism, so a revolutionist, if he has a serious attitude toward his task, is obliged with strict conscientiousness to analyze the structure of society, its functions and reflexes."

It was in the spirit of this dialectical materialist appreciation of the primary importance of objective reality in relation to the concepts in our heads that I sought to call attention to the need to recognize what had happened to the structure, functions and reflexes of society in Cuba.

It now turns out that it was a mistake on my part to take Slaughter seriously. Instead of continuing the discussion on this narrow but important point in methodology, if they did not care to acknowledge Slaughter's error and the mistake which this error led them into in the case of Cuba, the entire National Committee of the SLL, who adopted "Opportunism and Empiricism" by a unanimous vote, decided to foist a position on me and the SWP which neither I nor any other leader of the SWP holds. "Hansen," says the document, "has placed out in the open his defense of empiricism as a method, a method which has a natural expression in the politics of opportunism."

Having assigned this philosophical position to us, the authors of the document then use it to "explain" our political positions. "It is to these politics that Hansen's method now leads," they continue. "It is for this reason that he and Cannon drive for unification with Pabloism, whose opportunist and liquidationist revisions of 1953 have not been in any way corrected. All that has happened is that the theoretical stagnation of the American Trotskyists has led them inescapably to the same end."

It is quite true that the politics of the SWP is intimately linked to its philosophical outlook. But this outlook is dialectical materialism. That was the position I sought to defend in "Cuba -- the Acid Test." And when Slaughter or

Healy declare, as they do in their document, that "Hansen has placed out in the open his defense of empiricism as a method" their own method comes close to that of Stalinist frame-up artists.

This is the reason why the sections of "Opportunism and Empiricism" which pretend to deal with philosophy read like gibberish. It is gibberish. Insofar as it has any purpose at all outside of trying to put over the fraud that the SWP has turned against dialectical materialism and adopted empiricism, it seeks to justify the refusal of the SLL to recognize the facts in the Cuban Revolution.

The document in this respect simply repeats what the SLL leaders gave us before -- an incantation against the facts that is scarcely credible in twentieth-century England, a witch doctor's mumbo jumbo aimed at warding off the evil influence of reality on tribal chieftain Healy's private dogmas and insular outlook.

This is absolutely clear in the case before us. The facts concern the decisive case of Cuba. Let me enumerate them:

- (1) A revolution involving the most exploited sectors of the population.
- (2) The smashing of the bourgeois army, police and government.
- (3) A sweeping agrarian reform.
- (4) Establishment of a state monopoly of foreign trade.
- (5) The nationalization of the key sectors of the economy.
- (6) Expropriation of bourgeois property and the destruction of the bourgeoisie as a class.
- (7) The institution of planned economy.
- (8) The interlocking of Cuban economy with that of the Soviet bloc.
- (9) A heroic defense against the mightiest imperialist power on earth.
- (10) The declaration by the Castro government that its aims are the establishment of socialism.

(11) The issuance of appeals for socialist revolution throughout Latin America.

We said that looking at such facts from the viewpoint of Marxism, Cuba must be characterized as a workers state.

What was the response of the leaders of the SLL? They gave us an argument worthy of a medieval logician -- that it is "empiricism" to start with the facts; that is is "empiricism" to demand that theory submit to the test of facts.

On the basis of this scholastic approach the leaders of the SLL decided that Cuba remains a capitalist state. They decided further, in logical political consistency with their more basic premise, that Castro is just another Chiang Kai-shek. By taking that stand they convicted themselves of incompetence as leaders of the Trotskyist movement. Such views have nothing in common with Marxism. They are proper to a queer and outlandish sect of ultra leftists.

The leaders of the French section of the IC declared themselves at a loss for the time being on the most basic theoretical question -- the criteria to be used in determining the character of a workers state. They nevertheless decided that their shadowy position, in all consistency, deserved a shadowy characterization of Cuba. They came up with the designation "ghost" state. They seem not to have noticed that the real ghost -- if you can call it that -- had gone north and established its hideout in Miami. Kennedy did his best to convert this ghost state into a zombie state but did not succeed. When Miro Cardona fell out with Kennedy, the ghost gave up the ghost.

We refused to follow these novel thinkers in their novel positions. We turned down the invitation to join them in a political suicide pact.

Their response has been to accuse us of "opportunism," of "capitulation to Pabloism." They began to talk about the "degeneration" of the SWP and to picture the SWP to their rank and file as crisis ridden, no longer worthy of the respect of revolutionary socialists.

The Inside Dope About the SWP

Dialectics has curious ways of taking its revenge on philosophers who ignore it or abuse it. Having set up a pseudo system of thought, dedicated to Hegel and to Lenin's

study of Hegel, a system judiciously designed to compel denial of such colossal facts as those involved in the Cuban Revolution, the scholastics found themselves in a quandary when they turned to a different problem. How were they to recognize facts in which they were really interested -- namely, what is going on among the leaders of the SWP?

The theoreticians of the SLL worked out an ingenious solution. They dumped their theory about how facts aren't facts when they contradict preconceptions in the head of Slaughter or factional needs as seen by Healy. In relation to the SWP they want none of the cobwebs of such Hegelian mystification. They want facts, straight facts, raw facts, juicy facts, unvarnished, undiluted, undigested, unverified facts, any kind of facts -- the cruder the better. To get facts like that of course you've got to stay strictly on the level of the most vulgar empiricism. What you need, as an eminently practical philosopher like Healy well knows, is a pipeline, or some kind of underground disposal conduit that will provide a good flow of Inside Dope.

And so in the very same document that preaches a lofty gospel about Hegel and Lukacs, and empiricism and opportunism, and shame on the SWP for noticing the facts about Cuba, we are presented with a collection of "facts" gathered from the corridors and washrooms of the SWP by the Walter Winchelforths and Peeping Robertsons who think that airmailing that kind of stuff to Healy is really politicking.

It is a long time since practitioners of this school of politics have operated in the American Trotskyist movement. The last ones, I think, were Hugo Oehler and Martin Abern. That was a long time ago -- so long that the lesson seems to have been forgotten, or forgotten, by some people unless of course they never heard of Oehler and Abern.

The main line, of Oehler especially, was that the American Trotskyist movement was going centrist. It was being liquidated into the social democracy. The leadership was capitulating to Norman Thomas. And who was responsible? James P. Cannon, of course. He had set up a bureaucracy and put an end to internal democracy. All this, naturally, was confirmed to the hilt when Cannon took the American Trotskyists into the Socialist Party.

There were even more lurid stories if you cared to listen to the true, honest-to-god, unverified facts. Cannon was really a son-of-a-bitch. And also a bum. In his time Cannon was all right but that was long ago. Today, in the

mid-thirties, he had lost touch with reality.

Well, that was Hugo Oehler, Martin Abern and even Max Shachtman peddling the Inside Dope. They were pretty good at it.

Let us turn now to that section of Healy's document "Opportunism and Empiricism" which offers us the Inside Dope today about the SWP and see how well it measures up to the standards set by Martin Abern and Hugo Oehler almost thirty years ago.

I will not attempt to follow the scent which Healy leaves on various fireplugs and lampposts. I learned the hard way that it is not profitable to get too close to anyone loaded with the Inside Dope. Anyway, in most cases it is not necessary to do much about it. It vanishes when it dries.

In Healy's attempt to smear Murry Weiss, however, a few words are in order. It has always been characteristic of Murry that when he backs someone, it's to the hilt and without any reservations. A good example is the praise which Murry offered to the leadership of the SLL in the spring 1960 issue of the ISR and which Healy now cites with some contempt. The contempt is misplaced since neither Murry nor any of the rest of us were aware of the way that Healy really views his closest comrades in arms.

Murry's picture of the SLL leadership was so much more attractive than the reality, it seems, that ribald laughter was heard in Healy's office when they read the glowing description. Now Murry's "crime" meets with poetic justice. Healy has singled him out for a particularly vicious attack. A couple of short sentences torn from an article written by Murry in the fall 1960 issue of the ISR are quoted as "proof" that Murry has developed a position "contrary to all the teachings of our movement and a flagrant breach of the principles of Trotskyism."

The sentences written by Murry perhaps lend themselves to misrepresentation by someone of malevolent will like Healy, but then Healy's misrepresentation does not reflect Murry's views either then or now. If you want to know what Murry's views have been at any time in the past or at present, check the convention resolutions he voted for.

Healy, basing himself on the Inside Dope passed on by those in the SWP whose first loyalty is to the secretary of the SLL, seeks to wring further factional advantage from the

difficult personal problem which has forced Murry after thirty-one years continuous service to the movement to drop out of front-line activity for the time being.

Murry owes no apology to anyone for this, least of all Healy, who is utterly insensitive to such questions.

Another target selected by Healy happens by odd coincidence to be Cannon. That's the Cannon, James P. Cannon, the same one who was chopped down to size by Oehler, Abern and Shachtman. Appended to "Opportunism and Empiricism" is a copy of a letter written by Comrade Cannon to Farrell Dobbs under date of October 31, 1962 -- that was during the crisis over Cuba. This letter was not intended for publication. It was a telegraphic communication to the center such as Comrade Cannon writes from time to time -- unfortunately not frequently enough in my opinion -- in which he expressed an opinion in a context familiar to the correspondents. The letter was published by Healy without permission from the author or without consultation with Farrell Dobbs. The letter in fact was obtained by Healy from anonymous American Correspondents who have taken the SWP as their beat.

Healy made some gross miscalculations in publishing this letter by Jim Cannon. One of them was failure to read the letter in its new context. It constitutes the only lucid pages in the entire document and by contrast to its murky surrounding appears even brighter that it perhaps deserves, considering its modest aim.

There is nothing politically wrong with this letter. In fact it offers a positive contribution to the discussion of the Cuban crisis. But by tearing it out of the discussion of which it was a part and misinterpreting its meaning, Healy hopes to create prejudice among the rank and file of SLL against Comrade Cannon. "After a lifetime of struggle for revolutionary Marxism, particularly against Stalinism," says the Healy document, "he(Cannon) denies that whole career in two pages..." The demagogic innuendo is quite plain. Healy is suggesting that after more than a half century in the revolutionary-socialist movement, Comrade Cannon has suddenly gone soft, precisely on Stalinism, and of all places in the United States where the atmosphere is still heavy with McCarthyite witch-hunting and Stalinophobia.

In his letter to the center, Comrade Cannon addresses himself to a single crucially important question. Leaving aside other considerations, decisive as they may be in a broader analysis such as would be presented in an article for the public, Comrade Cannon expresses the opinion that

Khrushchev, faced with the immediate threat of an atomic war, acted correctly "on the level of military affairs and state relations." As a result the world was spared an immediate nuclear war and the workers gained time to pursue the class struggle against capitalism.

Healy, holding up the stolen letter, shouts that Cannon left out the broader considerations.

True enough, we can reply, the letter abstracts from broader considerations, especially an analysis of Khrushchev's political course. Having granted that, we would now like to hear from Healy, "What's your position if these broader considerations are left aside?" Or, as Comrade Cannon puts it in his letter: "The retreat was unavoidable and the concessions...did not give up anything essential. Those who judge otherwise should tell us what alternative course the Kremlin should have followed on the military and diplomatic fronts at the excruciating point of decision. Should Khrushchev have defied the embargo or refused outright to withdraw the missile bases?"

Healy does not answer. And from that failure to answer we can only conclude that he was not too concerned about averting the immediate threat of an atomic world war. In the case of Cuba last fall, Healy -- if we interpret his silence correctly -- was prepared to accept an immediate exchange of atomic missiles. Healy inadvertently reveals that his position was not too different from that of another ultra-left current, the Posadas grouping who consider nuclear war to be inevitable and even advocate that the Soviet Union should not hesitate to start it.

Healy stumbles into this revelation of his own ultra-leftist leanings because he is so intent on trying to prove that Cannon has "capitulated" to Khrushchev in accordance with the philosophy of "empiricism" which Healy foists on Cannon. How blind can you become under the impulses of blind factionalism? Cannon's letter itself makes clear where he stands on Khrushchev's politics and why he thinks it is important not to be trapped by mechanical negativism to Khrushchev's retreat in the Cuban crisis. "To condemn it and cry 'betrayal,'" Cannon warns, "would only help the Stalinists get off the hook where they are really vulnerable. That is their policy of supporting Kennedy, Stevenson and other 'peace-loving' Democratic capitalist politicians. This attitude, flowing from the Kremlin's doctrine of peaceful coexistence, has again been exposed as criminal."

It would seem to be in order for the two Healyite minorities to explain to the convention exactly wherein they think the SWP "betrayed" during the crucial crisis over Cuba last fall. They have a rare opportunity. Comrade Cannon is with us and will no doubt listen with interest to their explanation of Healy's charge that he capitulated to Khrushchev. Perhaps not with sympathetic interest.

Let us note one more point. Comrade Cannon's letter was attached to minutes sent out to the National Committee. In publishing this stolen item, Healy does not offer us by way of contrast any letters or minutes from his own committee during that period of world crisis. Were no letters sent to SLL headquarters by comrades stating their opinions? Were no meetings held by the top committee of the SLL? Was there a free exchange of opinion among the SLL leaders? Was the position taken by the public press of the SLL reached through a democratic process? Were there variant views among the SLL leaders at first? How were the differences settled? Or did everyone in the SLL leadership start at the same time, with his left foot first like the goose step? Has anyone ever seen any minutes of the top committee of the SLL? Does either of our minorities by rare chance receive them in return for their loyalty in providing the minutes of our Political Committee to Healy?

While I am on the subject, has anyone in the SWP seen any internal bulletins published by the SLL? I mean normal internal bulletins like ours, not the frenzied material that is turned out when a "renegade" is periodically thrown down the stairs at 186 Clapham High. The SLL just held a congress. Was there a discussion period prior to the congress? If there was, did a single rank-and-file comrade anywhere dare to make an original contribution? What kind of ideological life exists in Healy's organization? Are there any discussions? Does anyone have any views on any subject that differs from the unanimous opinion of Gerry Healy?

Perhaps our minorities are in better position than the rest of the SWP to enlighten us on this not unimportant question of the internal life and democracy of the SLL under the Healy regime.

Healy's Case Against the IS

Having set out on the one hand to dismiss the facts concerning such mighty world events as the Cuban Revolution by "mediating" them through Hegel and, on the other hand, to

drown us in "facts" about the "degeneration" of the SWP by pumping them from anonymous American Correspondents, the top leaders of the SLL have still not completed their case. They must still prove that the comrades of the International Secretariat have capitulated to bourgeois pressure and "betrayed" Trotskyism. Their "proofs" are of two kinds.

One is that on the Cuban Revolution and similar phenomena, the IS and the SWP share a common stand, both the IS and the SWP displaying what Slaughter in particular considers to be an abominably anti-Hegelian appreciation for facts. By accepting the facts about Cuba in the same way as the SWP, the IS is guilty of "betraying Trotskyism."

The other kind of "proof" that the IS is "betraying Trotskyism" is more direct. It consists of quotations which the experts of the Healy school dig up by combing through the publications of the IS.

Considering the number of IS publications and the variety of writers, the SLL has been able to produce surprisingly little. During the crisis over Cuba, Healy thought he had discovered one item -- a leaflet in defense of Cuba distributed by worker comrades at the Renault auto plant in Paris. There was some reference in the leaflet for the need to rally to the side of Cuba like the Soviet bloc countries. Perhaps the phrase was subject to attack by sleuths on the constant lookout for "betrayals" of Trotskyism. Perhaps the phrase was even so badly formulated as to be unacceptable in a party resolution. It might even have been in error. But it was quite clearly at most only a minor flaw in a vigorous and sincere effort by these Trotskyist workers to appeal to fellow workers adhering to the Communist party to defend Cuba more actively. If they were to be singled out for attention, it was wrong on Healy's part not to praise them.

Healy, however, decided that such rare and precious evidence as the phrase in this leaflet, really proving how the "Pabloites" betray Trotskyism, deserved prominent treatment in the Newsletter as a horrible example. It was part of Healy's peculiar way of defending the Cuban Revolution. And by displaying the quotation that way, Healy won much credit and prestige among the Slaughters as a judicious expounder of the Trotskyist view in Great Britain.

Such evidence is so rare, in fact, that Healy is still hoarding it even while everyone laughs at the ridiculous figure he cuts when he points to this as a prize exhibit of

"Pabloite revisionism." In his magnum opus "Opportunism and Empiricism" it is still on display among the trophies of the chase against the "Pabloites."

I will give one more example of a similar kind, dug up by Healy's research experts after long and assiduous combing of the publications of the IS. This appears in "Opportunism and Empiricism" under the heading "Pabloites Revise Transitional Program." It consists of a single sentence taken from the September 1962 issue of Bandiera Rossa, the newspaper of the Italian Trotskyists. It was part of a long contribution which was later published as a pamphlet "The Transition Program and Socialist Revolution."

The pamphlet really demonstrates the concern of the Italian Trotskyists about applying the Transition Program, but Healy is little interested in that. Into his hands had fallen precious proof of the "opportunism" of the "Pabloites" -- a whole precious sentence, beginning with a capital letter and ending with a period. A most unexpected windfall!

And here is how the damning sentence reads in "Opportunism and Empiricism": "In the first place the revolutionary Marxists do not exclude the help that some such partially progressive measure might provide, and it follows that the proletariat support immediately all measures intended to bring about a revival and a rationalization of the system, associating itself with and helping the action taken by the most dynamic sectors of the bourgeoisie."

On the basis of this, the National Committee of the SLL drew the conclusion, which they had already preconceived, about the "opportunism" of the Italian Trotskyists. "Instead of a firm revolutionary internationalist line, capable of providing a focus of concentration for the militants who begin to question Stalinism," we are told, "the Pabloites set about reducing the formulae of Trotskyism to the same kind of politics."

Now I happen to have a copy of the original Italian text, both as it appeared in Bandiera Rossa and later in the pamphlet. If any of you care to check the original, it is available. I can assure you that you will discover something rather startling. The original states the exact opposite of the translation for which the entire National Committee of the Socialist Labour League cast a unanimous vote. The exact opposite!

It reads that revolutionary Marxists reject the course which the British version puts them down as advocating.

Since Healy has especially invited us to study the quotation on which his condemnation of the Italian Trotskyists is based, let us examine the British version still closer. The sentence in question is included as part of a lengthy quotation. In the first paragraph the Italian Trotskyists attack the reformist position. In the second paragraph, where the mistranslation is put in their mouths, they just as obviously approve the reformist position. A painful question arises. How did it happen that not a single member of the National Committee of the Socialist Labour League noticed that these two paragraphs are mutually contradictory?

An even more painful question follows -- if they did notice that the two paragraphs are mutually contradictory, why did the entire National Committee of the Socialist Labour League, without a single exception, assume that the strange isolated sentence, illogically capitulating to the Italian reformists, represented the political position of the Italian Trotskyists?

Finally, we stand before an impenetrable mystery. How did every one of the members of the National Committee of the Socialist Labour League, without a single exception, succeed in translating the sentence to mean just the opposite of what it says in the original?

Is this an example of their concern for accuracy and for truth? Is this how they check all facts for themselves? It is sad business to have to record that the leadership of the Socialist Labour League stands at such low theoretical level that it is capable of committing such glaring errors in taking a stand on a question so grave as the unification of the world Trotskyist movement.

You are now acquainted with the major pieces of evidence which Healy has been able to excavate in recent times to prove the "opportunism" of the International Secretariat. This is what he offers as political justification for maintaining the split.

"On These Points We are 'Revisionists'"

I now come to what is perhaps the greatest fraud of all in the pretensions of the SLL leaders. They maintain that before a sound reunification can take place, the ground must first be prepared by a thorough "clarification" of positions which, of course, they offer to perform for the movement as a whole.

Let us turn again to the acid test of the Cuban Revolution. Clarification of the meaning of this great happening -- the most important challenge to Marxist theory and action since the Chinese Revolution -- can occur in only two ways: Either we must interpret the facts in the light of basic criteria -- in which case we must grant that Cuba is a workers state -- or we must revise our basic criteria. There is no other way; that is, if we are to remain on the scientific level called for by the Marxist method.

We saw this from the beginning. We went even further, asking ourselves whether the new facts confirmed the worth of our criteria in analyzing the character of the state in China, Yugoslavia and Eastern Europe or whether the new facts cast doubt on the criteria and therefore our previous analyses. Our conclusion was that the facts in the Cuban Revolution offer striking confirmation of our criteria and our previous analyses. We called attention to the dilemma faced by the leaders of the SLL and their disciples, asked some questions of the former state capitalist Phillips, who was accepted into their ranks, and awaited their reaction.

First as to Phillips. Whatever may be the views he now holds, they are obviously not worth serious consideration. As best as I can make out Phillips now feels that basic theory is not of practical importance, having little connection with political positions -- at least his -- certainly weighing far less in the scales than a pragmatic bloc dedicated to opposing the unification of the world Trotskyist movement and furnishing Healy with the Inside Dope about the SWP. We can safely permit Phillips to wither on the vine and turn our attention elsewhere.

For a time Healy sought to bluster, insisting on denying the facts about Cuba. This was his way of seeking to avoid the basic theoretical problem posed by the Cuban Revolution. Some of the professors who were trained in the British Communist party and who came over to our movement after the Hungarian Revolution sought to aid Healy ideologically by concocting an elaborate rationalization for avoiding facts. Thus we got Slaughter's remarkable references to Lukasc and Hegel. All this proved was that Slaughter has not yet overcome his Stalinist training which assigns ideologists the foul task of offering theoretical cover for no matter what vulgar position may be taken by the boss of the apparatus.

The leaders of the French section of the IC saw the basic dilemma and sought to tackle it rather than evade it. That is why their contributions make for more interesting reading, however mistaken their views are. Their suggested solution is to revise the basic criteria which our movement utilized in reaching the conclusion that China, Yugoslavia and the East European countries are workers states. They have not yet submitted the final results of this revisionism. Consequently, so far as they are concerned they can be considered to have withdrawn from the discussion.

The field therefore remains with those who stand on the old positions or who offer an alternative set of criteria. Up to now no one has come forward to offer an alternative set of criteria. Even Phillips, as we noted, is abstaining from the project after coming to the conclusion that his years of proffering state capitalism were waste effort since state capitalism is really not Marxist.

All that remains is the standard Trotskyist position held by both the adherents of the International Secretariat and all the sectors of the International Committee up until the time of the Cuban Revolution and the renewed efforts to end the split in the world Trotskyist movement.

Under the leadership of Gerry Healy, the National Committee of the Socialist Labour League now appears to have unanimously joined the French section of the IC in abandoning this standard Trotskyist position. On pages 20-21 of "Opportunism and Empiricism," they indicate the shift in their views. "Our French comrades are right to insist that the evaluation of the history of this discussion in the Trotskyist movement (over the establishment of deformed workers states) is more than a day's work, and the pre-condition of any useful results will have to be a much more serious and scientific handling of Marxist concepts than is displayed by Hansen with his easy identification of a 'petit-bourgeois formation' like the unique bureaucracy of the first workers state with the petit-bourgeois leadership of the July 26 Movement in Cuba.

" In the coming months the French and British sections of the IC will publish contributions on the history of the discussion of 'workers states'".

This is Healy's guarded way of admitting that he has accepted the position of the French section of the IC on this key question. To see more precisely what is involved, we need only turn to the document, "Position of the French Section of the International Committee on the Cuban Question."

(International Information Bulletin, April, 1963.) There the French section says quite frankly: "We will no doubt have to revise the analysis (made in 1948) of the new workers' states in Eastern Europe...We are happy that the discussion on Cuba inevitably calls for a re-examination of past discussions and the working-out of a new analysis of the nature of the 'iron curtain' countries, and especially of Yugoslavia and China. On these points we are 'revisionists'..."

Healy's shift toward the French revisionists is the only item of importance in the entire contribution bearing the pretentious title "Opportunism and Empiricism." Its significance is that the theoretical leaders of the SLL seem to feel that they have no choice now but to examine the validity of the criteria used by the world Trotskyist movement since 1948 in determining the nature of the new workers states. In this shame-faced way they recognize the correctness of the position taken by us since the beginning of the discussion on Cuba; namely, that if you admit the facts, then you are faced with acknowledging that Cuba is a workers state or with acknowledging that the theory of the workers states used since 1948, and before, must be revised.

What will be the results of this bid to revise the basic positions going back to 1948? It is impossible to tell specifically because the various sectors of the self-avowed revisionists appear to be moving in different directions and at different rates of speed. The revisionism can be carried back until it unwinds all of Trotskyism. On the other hand, some of the comrades may begin to see more clearly what is involved and decide to retreat.

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." What further startling changes may occur in the heads of this tendency I don't know; but the recognition that Cuba is a workers state is heartening evidence of the capacity of reality to make its way through the boniest barriers.

Wohlforth, on the other hand, now fascinated by the theory that Cuba is run by a ghost, stands in a state of limbo. In accordance with the Healy directive approving the line of the French about dabbling in revisionism, Wohlforth has been combing through the old discussions on China, Yugoslavia and Eastern Europe. An impressionable researcher, he claims at the moment to stand where Comrade Wright stood in 1950. That position, of course, was understandable in 1950. Usick held to the highest standards in theory which demand the utmost

caution before moving into something new like calling the East European countries workers states. In Wohlforth's case the position represents what the Freudians would call regression to an infantile stage. In a theoretician who bears all the outward indications of having crossed the line into post adolescence this is not a favorable contradiction.

A few points are to be noted in Wohlforth's latest document on Cuba. He has not in actuality moved an inch. He still denies that Cuba is a workers state; yet he agrees that China, Yugoslavia and Eastern Europe, where the same criteria apply, are workers states. He tries to maintain a distinction by advancing the criterion of "structural assimilation" in the one case and its absence in the other. As Tom Kerry has pointed out, Wohlforth is quite incomprehensible.

Wohlforth seems to be saying that "structural assimilation" relates to having a Stalinist formation in power, but then he cancels this out by warning about the danger of such a view. He can scarcely mean "structural assimilation" in a geographical sense in this day of the jet plane when Cuba is closer to Moscow than either Yugoslavia or China were a few years ago. And so we are left with an exercise in semantics that means little to anybody but Wohlforth.

A very revealing item about Wohlforth's theoretical equipment should be observed. He identifies Stalinism and the Soviet Union. This is directly observable in several places. On page 22 of his article "The Cuban Way -- the Pattern for the Future?" he puts it in capital letters so that it will be more easily noticed: "This situation led to the most fundamental contradiction of the Cuban Revolution: **THE PROGRESSIVE REVOLUTIONARY DEVELOPMENT OF CUBA WAS DEPENDENT UPON AID FROM COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY STALINISM.**" (Emphasis in original.)

Wohlforth is dead wrong. Cuba is dependent on aid from the Soviet Union and this is not the same as Stalinism. The mistake is not an isolated one. On page 23 Wohlforth uses the terms "USSR" and "Stalinism" interchangeably. Again on page 25, Wohlforth quotes an observation by Comrade Stein on the role of the "Soviet Union" and immediately identifies it with "Stalinism."

This identification of Stalinism with the Soviet Union is part of the ideological baggage which Wohlforth brought with him from the school of Shachtman. It is a fundamental error of very serious nature, the theoretical source of a host of errors, which invalidates everything Wohlforth has to say about the

character of the state in Cuba, or in any other workers state for that matter.

What can be expected from Healy and Slaughter as they join Wohlforth-Philips and the French self-avowed revisionists in exploring what needs and what does not need to be junked in Trotskyism? Does anybody care whether they deliver or do not deliver on their promise to stop us dead in our tracks with the mighty theoretical contributions they intend to make eventually? We can only tell them, "It's your democratic right to undertake a re-examination of basic positions, but please get out of the way while we continue working. The world Trotskyist movement cannot base itself on a question mark. Until the validity of an alternative position has been conclusively demonstrated it is our duty to promulgate and to defend the positions already won. That's what Trotsky taught us to do."

Let us note finally the highly contradictory position in which the British and French sections of the IC now find themselves: They fought against unification on the ground that what the world Trotskyist movement needed, especially the IS and the SWP, was ideological "clarification." But they are now compelled to seek clarification themselves -- and on some of the most basic positions of the movement. This destroys one of their key arguments against unification.

If they were to be logical, they cannot escape the conclusion that the best way to get the clarification they need is by joining in the reunification where it would be possible to continue a discussion under the best possible conditions -- on a cool, scientific level removed from factional heat and with the sympathetic participation of comrades who have already thought out all the major implications of the path on which the leaders of the British and French sections of the IC have now set foot.

A New Period Begins

The first act of the National Committee of the SLL after the Reunification Congress was to declare war on the unified Fourth International and the SWP. They and the French will probably set themselves up in business as a separate outfit, and Healy will continue to put the name "International Committee" on documents he chooses to send out, as he has been doing in the past. Their ultra-left sectarianism, combined with the most poisonous kind of factionalism, will offer no road out of the isolation. A more and more embarrassing question will face the SLL: If Healy can't unite with fellow

Trotskyists, whom in this wide world can he unite with? In attempting to answer that question, Healy may yet prove that the other side of the coin of ultra-leftism can be the worst opportunism.

The sterility of Healy's present course will pave the way for catastrophic splits of which the split among his American followers is only a foretaste.

As for our policy toward these holdouts, it will not be to attempt to foster any new splits. In the interests of uniting all Trotskyists, it would be much superior if the British and French sections of the IC could go through their coming experience without any fresh splintering in which good and valuable comrades can be completely lost of Trotskyism.

I am so convinced of the correctness of this policy that I willingly offer my services to comrades Wohlforth and Robertson if they think that a go-between like me would help them in a fresh effort to get back on speaking terms.

Our goodwill, however, is not likely to prevent the British and French comrades from going through some bitter experiences. Unfortunate and regrettable as this is, especially for the SLL in a general situation as promising as the one now to be seen in Great Britain, it involves only a relatively small minority of the world Trotskyist movement. The overwhelming majority are now united in a common organization to which the Socialist Workers party offers its ideological and fraternal support.

Many problems still remain to be solved in binding the united movement tightly together. These include local differences that still exist in some areas. Such hangovers from ten years of factional war will require time for liquidation. Some differences also still exist on an international scale. These, I think, will very likely yield in short order to a new pattern of comradely teamwork, perhaps before some of the local differences are completely resolved.

All these problems were borne in mind at the Reunification Congress and a transitional period was established for their resolution. By the time of the next international congress they should be worked out satisfactorily.

The reunification not only ends the long period of division that hampered work to one degree or another everywhere, it now puts into operation the combined forces of the main contingents of world Trotskyism. These include the most

seasoned cadres and outstanding older leaders as well as energetic and enthusiastic young potential leaders. The immediate consequence will be considerably increased recruiting power. As everyone recognizes, this is a key element in the task of converting propaganda groups into mass revolutionary-socialist parties.

I should like to end with a word to the younger comrades. The split which we suffered in the SWP in 1953-54 occurred during the McCarthyite period when for us in the United States it was crucially important to maintain program and to resist tooth and nail any attempts to water it down under the influence of pessimistic or capitulatory moods such as appeared in the opposition headed by Cochran. The reunification occurs under opposite conditions: when the world upsurge of revolutionary forces has begun to affect the masses inside the United States itself as we see in the inspiring development of the Negro struggle. The reunification thus comes at a most opportune time.

To bring about the reunification was a complex and difficult task. The leaders who were primarily responsible for the actual work are proud to place it before the youth. It is a big achievement that will have enduring consequences.

To the youth we say, "Take the united movement. Turn to full account the possibilities now opened up. Carry it forward to completion of the task envisaged by Trotsky, the construction of a world movement, embracing hundreds of thousands and millions of the disinherited of the earth."

#

End