

Marxist Bulletin No. 3
(part ii - 1963)

Wohlforth
Against the R.T.

"The essential barrier to reunification or collaborative activity is that for our part we aim to create an alternative, politically and organizationally, to the existing Majority party leadership. But you have defined yourselves, spoken and acted, as closer to the party Majority than to us. That has been the insuperable obstacle between us."

-from the Reply by the Revolutionary Tendency
to the Wohlforth-Philips Minority in the SWP,
18 May 1963.

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Box 1377, G.P.O.
New York, N.Y. 10001

Preface

"Each compromise with the revolutionary conscience prepares a greater compromise on the morrow, and therefore renders it more difficult to break away." --Leon Trotsky

The documents contained here are a continuation of our Marxist Bulletin No.3 on the Healy-Wohlforth group. Part I dealt with the 1962 split in the Revolutionary Tendency inside the Socialist Workers Party, leading to the formation by a minority in the RT, led by Tim Wohlforth, of the "Reorganized Minority Tendency". Part II contains the documents of the 1963 period, culminating in the expulsion of the RT majority (Robertson-Mage-White grouping) from the SWP--an expulsion desired, facilitated and finally provoked by the outright lies proceeding from the pen of Tim Wohlforth. Part IV dealt with the attempts of the RT supporters to heal the unprincipled split in the tendency and wage a common fight against the Pabloist revisionism which had swept the Trotskyist movement, efforts which we continued despite the gross organizational misconduct of the Wohlforth grouping until, after 1966, following unity maneuvers and a second rupture manufactured by Healy-Wohlforth, the political degeneration of that grouping qualitatively worsened so as to preclude further attempts at reunification on our part.

Behind the 1962 Split

The ostensible basis for the original split in the RT had been the question of the SWP: revolutionary or centrist? [for the documents of this discussion inside the RT see Marxist Bulletin No.2]. Our tendency contended that the SWP majority had become centrist and adopted the revisionist political outlook of Pabloism. Wohlforth, however, maintained that the SWP remained a revolutionary party and would be "the main instrument for the realization of socialism in the U.S." ("Call for the Reorganization of the Minority Tendency", 13 November 1962). Backed up by Gerry Healy of the "International Committee for the Fourth International", Wohlforth presented this characterization of the SWP as an ultimatum, demanding that all RT comrades sign his "Call..." thus repudiating their position, or be expelled from the tendency. The majority of the RT refused. The Wohlforth minority then "expelled" the majority and set up the "RMT".

The real purpose of forcing a split on this issue was to guarantee Healy a subservient U.S. following which would defer to his authority, and that of his chosen instrument Wohlforth, no matter what their own views. Healy and Wohlforth hoped that most of the RT comrades could be intimidated by threat of expulsion from the tendency into signing their names to a position they disagreed with, thus compromising their ability to function as principled revolutionists in the future. Our comrades repeatedly stressed that they would have been willing to abide by tendency discipline on question of the nature of the party as on other questions, maintaining a common front towards the SWP majority; what they would not do was declare this position inside the tendency by signing Wohlforth's "Call...."

Personal motives were also involved in the split. Wohlforth, who had been the main public spokesman for the RT, had had his authority eroded by previous mistakes and high-handed organizational maneuvering and was about to lose the vote inside the tendency on the question of the nature of the Party. As a somewhat artificially selected "party leader" (Wohlforth was the only minority member of the SWP's leading body, the Political Committee) he wanted to remain the leader of something, anything, and preferred to be the big fish in the small "RMT" pond rather than an oppositionist inside the RT.

As the ostensible reason for forcing a split on this issue, Healy-Wohlforth concocted a self-justifying lie: that the RT majority intended an immediate split from the SWP, rather than remaining in the Party to fight for a Trotskyist perspective. They sought thereby to stampede tendency supporters into aligning themselves against the Robertson grouping in the split that was being prepared inside the tendency [for Wohlforth's accusations and our reply see Marxist Bulletin No.2]. That our supposed "split perspective" was an utter fabrication is shown not only by the refusal of most of the RT to be sucked in by Wohlforth's lie but by the simple fact that 8 months later our tendency was still inside the SWP! Moreover, at the time of our expulsion from the Party, SWP majority leader Farrell Dobbs was forced to admit that he could not cite one single act of indiscipline on our part (because of our willful, prolonged and deliberate refusal to commit such acts!). (Dobbs later told the 1963 Plenum: "We don't have to await formal proof of specific hostile acts, nor do we have to let concrete evidence pile up, one fact upon another, until the sheer weight of their attack on the party makes their patent disloyalty obvious even to the most blind." (our emphasis)--December 1963 "Report on Internal Party Situation" [reprinted in full in Marxist Bulletin No.4 Part II]). Wohlforth and the SWP leadership were united in their desire to get rid of the RT, but our steady adherence to Party discipline denied them the means. This obviously distressing situation for the majority and for Wohlforth was neatly taken care of when Wohlforth deliberately provided the majority with prefabricated charges which provoked our expulsion.

For Wohlforth was trapped. One the one side was the RT; on the other, the SWP leadership, on a steamroller course toward reunification with Healy's enemies, the Pabloists of the International Secretariat. Healy's desperate aim was to keep the SWP leadership on his side in the international battle, and his minions of the Wohlforth group were assigned the thankless task of maintaining a bloc--against the right-wing oppositions (Weiss, Swaback) and the left-wing (us)--with the Dobbs leadership, which despised them. As we stated regarding Wohlforth's role:

"The essential barrier to reunification [of the RT] or collaborative activity is that for our part we aim to create an alternative, politically and organizationally, to the existing Majority leadership. But you have defined yourselves, spoken and acted, as closer to the party Majority than to us." (18 May 1963)

The final, logical expression of Wohlforth's conciliationist policy was to offer up the RT for expulsion by the Dobbs regime, to both

hopefully deflect the SWP majority from action against the "RMT" and get rid of a tendency which embarrassed Wohlforth by its resolute struggle against Pabloist revisionism.

Wohlforth Betrays

The final proof of our accusation was yet to come. A month later, Wohlforth submitted a document, "Party and Class" [reprinted below], to the SWP pre-Convention discussion. In itself, this document contains little of importance. It heaps invective and innuendo upon the "Robertson group", implies he will fight the RT better than Dobbs can ("The majority is, of course, hindered in answering these comrades politically precisely because it also resists a turn of the party toward the class."), seeks unsuccessfully with pompous and meaningless abstractions to justify his unprincipled bloc with the state-capitalist Philips tendency, and displays his party patriotism. He shamefully bleats:

"We do not consider the party a bureaucratic jungle, neither are we interested in organizing battles against the leadership. We have sought to the best of our ability to assiduously avoid such battles and have disassociated ourselves from those interested in such a course."

(Wohlforth's main contribution to the pre-Convention discussion was equally unimportant: a massive 43-page document, "Decline of American Imperialism and the Tasks of the SWP" [SWP Discussion Bulletin Vol.24, No.10] which in deference to the "conquest of the masses" orientation of the Philips group, called for the Party to charge simultaneously into all sides of the mass movement. The document was easily subjected to ridicule by the SWP leadership for its Don Quixote perspective [see "The Whirling Dervish School of Politics", SWP Discussion Bulletin Vol.24, No.18]. By way of contrast, our tendency submitted a one-page amendment calling for a class orientation to the Black movement, a modest but real perspective of colonizing into the South and the recreation of nuclei within key sections of the industrial working class [see below].)

The real purpose of "Party and Class", however, was its appendices [reprinted in full in Marxist Bulletin No.2]. Supposedly to "clarify" the stand of the "RMT" for the Majority, appended were two items from the 1962 intra-tendency discussion in which Wohlforth had mendaciously charged the Robertson wing with: "rejecting party building and party discipline", "opening up the tendency to non-party members", "sneaking people into the party" and having a "split perspective"--all entirely false and originally intended to prepare the split inside the RT, as already shown. Thus Wohlforth, having earlier carried through the unprincipled split inside the tendency, had no inner resistance to blocking with the Pabloist SWP leadership to have his former political collaborators--with whom he supposedly shared an anti-Pabloist perspective--expelled from the Party!

Ironically enough, Wohlforth provided the Party majority with false, manufactured allegations of our supposed indiscipline with the full knowledge that the discussion within the RT on the nature of the SWP contained real information on the indiscipline of his own tend-

ency--his collaboration with Healy. But we refused to respond in kind by giving the SWP leadership this club to use against Wohlforth, even after Healy brazenly blew the whistle on him himself, stating in a letter to Dobbs [reprinted below]: "Of course, we sent comrade Wohlforth a copy. He is part of our international tendency." (When finally, after our expulsion from the Party, we planned to make public all the material documenting our origins and history, we even informed Wohlforth in advance. But the Dobbs regime found Wohlforth a useful whipping boy and never took organizational action against him on the basis of his intrigues with Healy.) Wohlforth was confident that he could fink on us without fear of reprisal in kind because he knew our comrades would not sacrifice principle for organizational advantage or personal vendetta.

Wohlforth's vicious betrayal availed him very little, however. Our tendency was suspended, then expelled, in the months after the 1963 Convention in which the SWP had voted to reunify with the Pabloists internationally (forming what is now the United Secretariat). This reunification meant the frustration of Healy's aims toward the SWP leadership and left the Wohlforth grouping hopelessly compromised and its presence inside the Party superfluous. Six months after our expulsion, Wohlforth arranged for his own group's expulsion by flagrantly violating an established SWP discussion procedure (typically, while telling his own followers that the Party would not take disciplinary action against them so that they would be faced with Wohlforth's *fait accompli*). But his wretched history of betrayal there was not without effect, for it was one more step into the mire of opportunism and slander which has continued to mark his political conduct ever since.

--Marxist Bulletin staff
August 1970

New York, N.Y.
May 9, 1963

Dear Comrades,

Some six months or so have passed since the split in the minority tendency. The pre-convention period has now opened requiring that all in the party take a political stand on the fundamental questions posed before our party and the world movement.

This situation necessarily raises the question of the relations between the former constituents of the minority tendency during the pre-convention period. It is our firm opinion that such relations must be objectively based on political agreement or disagreement. There can be no other basis for relations among principled political people. Whatever level of collaboration between minority groups may be possible can only be determined by first determining the level of political agreement.

We therefore propose that all those comrades who formerly made up the minority tendency engage in an exchange of political views. Our basic political views can be found in two documents 'The Decline of American Imperialism and the Tasks of the SWP' and 'The Rebuilding of the Fourth International.' We assume these two documents are now available to all comrades. We specifically request the opinion of the comrades on these two documents.

We would appreciate receiving in turn any material you may be preparing individually or collectively for the pre-convention discussion. We will be very happy to give you our views on such material. In addition if there are any questions not covered in our two major documents upon which you wish our views we will be happy to provide these to the best of our ability.

Even if you do not wish our opinions and do not feel, on your part, that you can envision any form of collaboration with us, we would still like to know your opinion of our material. On the basis of this we will then be able to work out our own attitude towards relations with you.

We feel it is extremely important to proceed in an objective, non-factional, political manner. It is best that we put aside all organizational charges and countercharges and discuss only the basic political questions before the movement. If there is anything we can do to facilitate the lessening of factional tensions between minority comrades please let us know and we will do what we can to facilitate this.

It is the political responsibility of all comrades to keep the channels of political communication between minority comrades open at all times.

Please let us know your answer to this letter as soon as possible as the convention is coming closer and closer.

Comradely,
Tim Wohlforth for the
Reorganized Minority Tendency

Copies to: Jim R., Shane M., Geoff W., Bertha M.

2
corrected
D R A F T

New York City
18 May 1963

Reorganized Minority Tendency

Dear Comrades:

(1) We were happy to receive your communication of May 9 raising 'the question of the relations between the former constituents of the minority tendency during the pre-convention period.' We view your letter as a step away from your earlier position, as presented by comrade Wohlforth in his circular letter of last Nov. 14, that 'Under no conditions, however, can we collaborate with the Robertson-Mage faction.' We for our part have not become reconciled to the status quo, and our statement of last Nov. 4 remains in force. At that time we declared that we would persist in seeking reunification of the tendency as well as seek a common front and common work between us in the interim wherever possible. The fact is, of course, that in conflict with one interpretation and in accord with our declared intentions, we have and will remain within the SWP. Now that the convention period has arrived the reality of our presence cannot be ignored. It is our hope that additional recognition and understanding may also flow from this and related circumstances.

(2) We are readily willing to comply with your request for an exchange of convention discussion materials and of political views generally. We are prepared to do this formally or informally as you wish. We are puzzled, however, as to what concretely can be achieved just now by such a process. Prior to the issuance to the party of any of the various resolutions, a discussion would have served to test out the possibilities for our coming before the party in bloc with a common series of positions. And following the convention we will be in a position to draw up a balance sheet on the then concluded phase of inner-party struggle. Thus in the immediate post-convention period the issue of our reunification would be posed for examination in the light of the whole interval since the split and culminating in the intense testing process of a party convention. However, for the present you by your prior independent publication of convention documents have committed us both to struggle openly in competition with one another during the convention process. Given what will be our differing and partly conflicting resolutions, private contact between us necessarily plays a distinctly secondary role right now. In any case, our mutual political appreciations will be presented through the medium of the party discussions. Nonetheless, we will give you copies prior to submission to the party of all our tendency pre-convention material, both formal resolutions and documents as well as personal contributions.

(3) You write of the desirability of reducing factional tensions. That, of course, is a complex question. Such tensions do not arise through mere spontaneous, subjective ill-will, and consequently are not to be disposed of by a wave of the hand. For

example, much in those aspects of what your grouping is and does that engenders our hostility (above all what we necessarily see as your conciliationism toward the Majority) is, from your standpoint, perhaps utterly correct or even vital. Surely the reverse is also true--much that is to us essential you deem reprehensible. Moreover, the very lack of clear-cut political differentiation in the face of our organizational schism and competitiveness is a potent source of sharp antagonisms. What can and should be done in any case is to go about our differences and clashes in a way which maximizes political consciousness. Thus important qualities are precision in treatment of issues and emphasis on the political implications and relationships of organizational or personal incidents, rather than using such things as 'atrocious stories' about 'the bad guys'. Above all, a verifiable, documentary approach is called for in treating with political, theoretical, or other matters in dispute.

(4) To summarize very briefly some of our views and intentions as well as the most essential objections to your convention documents and positions:

(a) We have formally arrived at the position that Cuba is a deformed workers state. This will be reflected in our Sino-Soviet resolution, 'The Sino-Soviet Dispute: New Stage in the Mortal Crisis of Stalinism', which we are introducing. We aim to answer the Majority's draft which does not at any point differentiate Trotskyism politically from Fidelismo and thus necessarily glosses over our essential programmatic view--the political revolution--as against all shades of stalinist rule. Since your PC representative, comrade Wohlforth, voted (with reservations) for the Majority draft, you presumably will stand opposed to whatever we bring before the party.

(b) We intend to present a resolution on the question of the Fourth International, i.e., in opposition to unity with the Pabloites. At the same time we intend to make it clear that even if the unity is consummated, our duty is to remain in the American SWP. Moreover, in our opinion, on the international level there has as yet been insufficient political clarification and organizational preparation for the International Committee to proceed to transform itself into a competing, formal F.I. Rather if the SWP-Pabloite unity goes through, we conclude that the IC forces should go along. They should openly transform themselves within the 'united' F.I. into the nucleus of a Bolshevik (i.e., proletarian-revolutionary) international tendency struggling to lay the foundations for a real Fourth International at the next stage. The IC's weak position in the present situation seems to us to be the reason why in recently published Healy-Hansen correspondence (Discussion Bulletin, Vol. 24, No. 12), Hansen was able to outflank Healy and place the SLL on the defensive in argument.

(c) We see one central defect in your convention material. It is common and basic to both your American and International resolutions, i.e., 'The Decline of American Imperialism and the Tasks of the SWP' and 'The Rebuilding of the Fourth International'. This erroneous outlook is expressed clearly and briefly in

two places. It is found in section 8. of your International draft and in point 1. of the Philips amendment at the last plenum. This amendment was endorsed and appended to your American resolution. We do not believe that the way to combat the revisionists' surrender of a strategic perspective of proletarian revolution is by counterposing a demand for the Trotskyists to undertake (everywhere and with forces no matter how small!) immediate agitational struggles of the working masses. This is a call which perhaps corresponds to felt inner-factual needs but which lacks reality. Your posing of our immediate task in every country as 'the conquest of the masses' creates an enormous discrepancy between this declared task and our means. This call is a slide into a sectarianism which tends to cut the movement off from opportunities as they are--witness your indifference bordering on hostility toward developing an approach to the 'Progressive Labor' left breakaway from the American CP. Thus you did not support our memorandum on the 'P.L.' group. The general, but not sole or universal, perspective which the present world juncture demands, in our opinion, is one which places major emphasis on propagandistic work toward the crystallization of Trotskyist cadres. Today in most parts of the world our task is to lay down the foundations for revolutionary parties, not to pretend they already exist and declare 'they' should struggle for hegemony over the mass movement.

(d) We are seriously disturbed by your treatment of the PC Majority draft on the Negro question. In many respects this is the worst document the Majority has presented for the coming convention. It constitutes a denial of a decisive role in the victory of the Negro struggle by both the working class and its revolutionary party. The document treats with Negroes as a class-undifferentiated people and places the 'white' Trotskyist party in a necessarily peripheral role. Your PC representative only abstained (!) on this miserable betrayal of Marxism and the class struggle! Your reporter to the NY branch, comrade Mazelis, speaking on the basis of not yet written nor even specific amendments, did not challenge the denial of the vanguard role of the party. Comrades of the Revolutionary Tendency intend to write on this subject in the present discussion.

(e) Throughout your recent writings there runs a tendency to counterpose 'proletarian' agitational struggle amongst the masses as against 'petty-bourgeois' party-centered propaganda work. There are several things wrong with this. There is a deep-seated need for the American movement to recreate ties with the working class. Some examples of indicated means are: through regular, sustained press sales at selected factory gates and union meetings; through seeking to create in the next period a couple of small union fractions in whatever spots nationally are (i) important parts of the working class; (ii) accessible to entry; and (iii) where the comrades involved can have a viable long-term perspective.

Whatever contact and recruitment will be forthcoming in the shortrun from such work will be in good measure a response to the ideas of socialism--unfortunately not to our leadership in mass struggles and certainly not as a result of sterile, empty agitation about Building a Labor Party Now. It would be patronizing to write off workers as unresponsive to properly presented propaganda. Moreover, to slight the Leninist party 'in favor of' the working class carries a faint but perceptible flavor of a syndicalist tendency such as eventually came to full flower in sections of the old state-capitalist Johnson-Forrest Tendency.

(f) We present views to the party on questions in which you appear to be largely uninterested or which you consider harmful to raise. Thus we have dealt with the issue of inner-party democracy in our statement to the National Committee, "For the Right of Organized Tendencies to Exist Within the Party! -- statement on the Dobbs-Kerry motion 'Party Discussion Procedure'". Your position on the Dobbs-Kerry motion is not known to us. Additionally, our comrades are challenging the Majority's line on party-youth relations as in the document collection recently submitted for bulletin publication by comrade Rose J. In your American resolution, you on the other hand endorse the party treatment of the youth when you state as your entire contribution therein on the subject: 'The party must continue to expand its policy of actively assisting and supporting the work of the YSA.' While it is true that issues such as these are not the most crucial to the movement, they are important and relevant to the totality of the Majority's departure from Marxism-Leninism. Further, in actual application these are matters of evident importance to our own existence and struggle within the SWP. Moreover, raising the questions of party democracy, autonomy of the youth organization, and the like, are excellent ways to initially reach those party comrades such as former CP'ers or youth members who are especially and properly sensitive on a given issue.

(5) In summary and on the basis of your documents in comparison with our own positions, our opinion is that the basis for a reunified left-opposition in the SWP still exists. As suggested in this letter there are a number of particular differences shown between our two groups. These are compatible with existence as a unified tendency. Indeed there is no position held by your grouping which might not be found among one or another of the comrades of the Revolutionary Tendency.

The essential barrier to reunification or collaborative activity is that for our part we aim to create an alternative, politically and organizationally, to the existing Majority party leadership. But you have defined yourselves, spoken and acted, as closer to the party Majority than to us. That has been the insuperable obstacle between us.

It is our hope that your letter of May 9 indicates the possibility of a modification of your stance with regard to our group. The struggles through the convention period will show if

this is true. In the meantime, to repeat, we readily accept your offer to exchange information and opinions between us as we have sought to offer in this present letter. We are waiting to hear further from you. In addition as the pre-convention period unfolds and if our exchanges are fruitful, various extensions of contact or working relations may prove feasible.

Comradely,

Shane Mage
James Robertson
Geoffrey White

for the Revolutionary Tendency

Amendment by Shane Mage, James Robertson and Geoffrey White for the Minority to P.C. Draft Resolution:

"Preparing for the Next Wave of Radicalism in the United States"

substitute the following for the entirety of paragraph 41:

41. A) Our mass work, linked with a general propaganda offensive, is an indispensable part of our preparation for the next wave of radicalism in the United States. Our aim is to prepare for the successful transition from propagandistic modes of work today to the building of a mass revolutionary party and to vying for leadership in the class struggle in the following period. Of pivotal importance is the ability of the party to solidify its general gains from current work by laying down and strengthening its roots in the mass movement.

B) In the Negro movement, North and South, there are today real opportunities. In the North our spearhead should be based on a combined approach. We aim to work with organizations selected on the basis of their militancy in particular localities and regions; we are also involved in supporting the Committee to Aid the Monroe Defendants (CAMD). This kind of activity should be coupled with such direct involvement as sustained mass sales of appropriate issues of the press in the Negro ghettos and making vigorous and sharply directed campaigns during elections. We will then ourselves be in a position to become involved in and grow from new stages and turns in the struggle. An example of such a turn is that promised by the Philadelphia mass picket line for Negro jobs at construction sites. As regards the South today, we are witnessing from afar a great mass struggle for equality. Our separation from this arena is intolerable. The party should be prepared to expend significant material resources in overcoming our isolation from Southern struggles. In helping to build a revolutionary movement in the South, our forces should work directly with and through the developing left-wing formations in the movement there. A successful outcome to our action would lead to an historic breakthrough for the Trotskyist movement. Expressed organizationally, it would mean the creation of several party branches in the South for the first time--for example, in Atlanta, Birmingham or New Orleans.

C) In maintaining its orientation to the working class as a whole, the party must steadily seek to make or find opportunities to recreate Trade Union fractions at selected spots across the country in industries important to the class struggle. Moreover, every party branch should develop contact with the most important unions and factories in its area; for example, through regular, long-term press sales, and accompanied, where possible, by direct electoral campaign approaches.

D) Unless the party is able to create and develop nuclei in the broader layers of the working class movement in this preparatory period, it will be condemned to sterile isolation or an

accelerating political degeneration in the face of the certain upsurges ahead in the class struggle. Thus the party's taking hold today in the mass movement is a necessary pre-condition for going forward on the morrow in the historic mission of leading the working class to power. These primary considerations must be kept in mind in deciding the division of labor between mass work and general party activity.

12 June 1963

Section II

9

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May 14, 1963.

New York City

Dear Comrade Wohlforth:

The party leadership has not received IC Bulletin, No. 14 to which you refer in your letter of May 13.

This appears to be another outrageous situation of the kind we experienced in having to obtain from you a copy of the French document on Cuba. Although the French document had been made available to you, the secretary of the I.C. didn't bother to furnish us a copy.

Once again you, as spokesman for a minority within the party, have been supplied IC material which has not been made available to the party leadership. We can only conclude that there is a factional liaison between you and the secretary of the IC which is being carried on behind the back of the party.

Our movement has always looked with disfavor upon such practices.

Comradely,

FARRELL DOBBS

cc: Preston

186a Clapham High Street,
LONDON, S.W.4.

22nd May, 1963.

Farrell Dobbs,
Secretary, S.W.P.

Dear Comrade Dobbs,

We have just received a copy of your letter of May 14 to comrade Wohlforth.

The theme of this letter is a continuation of that contained in your letter under date of May 7. Both letters contain allegations which are completely untrue, and can be most easily disposed of. For almost 12 months a Parity Committee consisting of representatives of the International Committee and the International Secretariat has been endeavouring to organize a discussion which will not just be confined to the leaders of the various tendencies, but which will draw in rank-and-file Trotskyists in all parts of the world.

What possible contribution can your letters of May 7 and May 14 make to this discussion?

Your own organization is within a few weeks of its biennial convention. The immediate effect of these letters will be to create an atmosphere of suspicion and hysteria which will sharpen the factional alliances on secondary organizational matters thus confusing and beclouding the important political issues.

We believe that this type of practice belongs to the past of the movement. It has got nothing in common with the opinions of those who want the Parity Committee to function in a way that will facilitate the reunification of the world Trotskyist movement. These include many members of the SWP, the SLL and many others inside the ranks of the International Secretariat.

Please let us try once more to approach the problems of the world movement in as reasonable and as objective a way as we can. We feel that this is necessary in order to emphasize the extremely complex nature of the issues involved.

In 1953 there was a deep-going split which we consider was the outcome of a revisionist rejection of Marxism by Pablo and his group on the International Secretariat. You, at that time, organized a split based upon your Open Letter to All Trotskyists issued in November 1953. This split took place in an atmosphere of confusion because the ranks of the international movement were not sufficiently clear on the issues involved.

Early in 1954 we proposed a Parity Committee to recommence the discussion and endeavour, if possible, to work out direct methods of collaboration. You at first agreed to this, but you then requested us to break off our relations with the Parity Committee and discontinue the discussion with the International Secretariat.

In 1956 you proposed a unification on the basis of a parity in the world leadership because you said you did not trust the organizational methods of Pablo and his group. We suggested to you that this approach had serious shortcomings because it did not allow for adequate political discussion beforehand. The International Secretariat did not accept your proposals and there matters stood for the time being.

From 1956 onwards, it became clear to those of us who studied your press and publications that the SWP was very rapidly developing methods of work and thinking similar to those of Pablo. We hesitated to raise these matters with you at first since we hoped that they would be corrected in the course of time. However, this did not take place and the political differences between us became more serious.

Early in January 1961 we opened a written discussion with you. This discussion was entirely a one-sided affair. An examination of the records shows that not only did you not submit our documents over this period for the consideration of your membership, but you failed to reply to us on the important questions which we raised.

By February 1962 it became clear that to all intents and purposes the policies of the SWP were indistinguishable from those of Pablo and his group. A new complication was developing in the world movement and it appeared that the problems had now to be tackled in a different way. Previously it was our hope that this could be achieved by first of all a clarification within the forces of the International Committee and then an approach to the International Secretariat for discussions on the political documents of our movement and theirs. We now felt that it was necessary for the IC to go ahead to open a discussion with the International Secretariat through the medium of the Parity Committee.

When we made this proposal we were aware that a lot of problems had to be surmounted. Firstly, there was the existence of a revisionist current led by Pablo. Now there was yourselves who had positions which were similar, but who at the same time claimed that you disagreed with his methods. Then there were the differences between important sections of the International Secretariat. One of these, the Posadas group in Latin America, has already split.

Within the International Committee there were differences over, amongst other things, the estimation of Cuba. Inside your own organization there was a minority which claimed agreement with us on some questions and disagreement on others.

What was needed and what we still feel is needed most in the international movement is not a combination of blocs and alliances for limited factional purposes between the tendencies but a discussion which will reach into the ranks and encourage new leaders to come forward within the international movement, thus assisting those who have borne the brunt of this work since

the end of the war. We need, in addition, a thoroughgoing examination of the experiences of the national sections on such questions as entry in the social democratic and Stalinist parties.

We saw the international discussion not as a medium for creating new divisions or for making it impossible to effect a serious unification, but as a medium whereby the problems of the world movement as a whole would be brought up for review in a way that would facilitate the emergence of a new leadership.

To rush into supporting a unification such as you are doing now clarifies nobody and leaves the issues very much as they were. It simply presents a front which has no real substance. True enough such a measure may temporarily attract fresh elements but it cannot train and develop them. The moment serious political differences emerge then the crisis will begin all over again. Our insistence upon an international discussion has always carried with it the necessity for joint work carried out seriously between the tendencies.

These proposals for the development of the international movement are, of course, only temporary. They can either lead to a definitive split between the tendencies or to a reunification. We hope that the latter course will become possible but it is too early yet to say.

That is why we have to be extremely patient with all the developments within the movement and avoid utilizing incidental difficulties and organizational grievances in a way that would prevent the movement from developing.

Since the formation of the Parity Committee there have been quite a number of issues which could have been used in this way. But thanks to the maturity of both sides this has not been the case until this recent unfortunate attack which you have launched upon comrade Wohlforth.

Let me cite a few of the problems that arose.

Firstly, there is the problem of language translation of international bulletins. This has not yet been resolved but it must be if the real discussion is to take place. Meanwhile, some of the tendencies have an advantage over others.

A delegation of Belgian comrades visited our National Committee and participated in a weekend of discussion last December. The discussion was sharp but that has in no way prevented further discussions being organized. We planned a return discussion in Belgium early in the new year. Two of our comrades travelled there, but unfortunately no one met them on arrival because our letter announcing the times never arrived. This meant that they had to spend the best part of a day doing nothing. Such an issue might have caused friction just as in the case of the international bulletin which you claim has not arrived, but if it had the matter would have rightly been condemned as stupid and petty.

We had a very serious crisis develop with the IS sympathising group in Britain which could not be explained in writing because of legal reasons. We were in great difficulties as to how to convey to the comrades what was involved, so we urgently requested that they arrange a sub-committee to discuss the matter. We stressed with them that unless something was done we might have to reconsider our attitude towards the Parity Committee. This caused certain misgivings amongst members of the IS which were quickly cleared up when they arrived in Britain and learned why we had made such an urgent request. Because of goodwill on both sides we were able to achieve a settlement of the dispute.

We were also aware that comrade Hansen was engaging in long discussions with the IS in Europe. He attended the meeting of the IEC towards the end of last year. We could have felt this was wrong because he did not beforehand seek the opinions of the IC about such a step, but we accepted his report in the spirit in which it was made and avoided friction on a matter which could not have helped anybody.

Your paper, The Militant, has been carrying a considerable amount of material reprinted from IS sources. We strongly object to the line of these articles and we could protest since you are still formally associated with us, but we haven't done this.

When comrade Hansen's bulletin 'Cuba - the Acid Test' arrived in Europe everyone as far as we know, apart from ourselves, received copies by airmail. A fortnight elapsed and we wrote to you for a copy. If we had been as touchy and factional as you are in your letters, we may have suggested that you deliberately avoided sending us a copy (see appended correspondence). But we did not do this.

You are now splitting from the IC and organizing a factional gathering of former IC supporters to have a fusion. We consider that you are making a serious mistake which we shall speak about in a few days, but we have always recognized that such alliances might well take place in the course of the struggle for clarification.

We propose to continue the discussion through the Parity Committee even though we feel that your split is completely unjustified. We feel that you should have waited until the International Committee holds its congress and then debated the political issues before the comrades with whom you have been associated for the past ten years.

Although the ultimate goal of our movement will suffer a reverse as a result of this action, we shall still continue to press for a genuine and thorough discussion within the international movement for the purpose that we have already outlined.

The bulletin no. 14 which you complain in your letter to comrade Wohlforth you did not receive was despatched to you from this office on May 4. Of course, we sent comrade Wohlforth a copy. He is part of our international tendency. We have always

sent him copies of such bulletins, just as when we were collaborating with you in the course of the struggle against Haston and the RCP leadership you always sent us such documents.

We do not object when you send the IS documents. Then why should you object when we send comrade Wohlforth documents? It may be that the bulletin was mislaid in the post, the same as we have experienced at other times. If that is the case then it could be easily remedied and another one is on the way.

You know very well that we did not handle the distribution of the French comrades' 'Report on Cuba'. They send such documents out themselves and we are sure that they sent one to you. Surely if this were lost and you had not received a copy when you received comrade Hansen's document, the correct procedure would have been to write to them or to comrade Hansen for a copy.

We are not sympathetic to minorities who do not carry out seriously the work of the national sections, even if they support us politically. When comrade Fox came here last autumn, we assisted him in drafting the memorandum which was presented to you on November 13, 1962. We are reproducing this memorandum [see Marxist Bulletin No.2-I].

When this comrade returned to the US, the memorandum caused a split within their tendency. We have continuously tried to explain to all of the comrades in the Wohlforth and Robertson groups that they must abide by the terms of this memorandum. If other tendencies support us in other sections, we shall adopt the same attitude.

You knew already from reading that memorandum that we are in political agreement on most questions with comrade Wohlforth. Why do you raise a scandal now about these matters?

We are asking you to permit the international movement to develop this political discussion which it so badly needs. We are asking you to allow the SWP rank and file to participate in a pre-conference discussion that will be free from threats and factional declamations which in any way may cut across the political discussion. Your national conference cannot terminate this discussion, because it will continue to be organized from the Parity Committee.

We shall in no circumstances stand idly by and allow any kind of organizational measures to be taken against comrades Wohlforth, Art Fox or any other tendencies including Shane Mage or Robertson whose desire is to seriously participate in the international discussion.

It seems strange that when comrades of all tendencies are seriously striving to organize an international discussion which would lead to agreement on world problems you should now embark on a course in relation to comrade Wohlforth and others that will not only confuse the political questions but may well lead you to take organizational measures against them.

If you persist with your present course then we shall refer the matter to the Parity Committee so that a sub-committee can be set up to investigate your actions.

Yours fraternally,

G. HEALY

National Secretary, Socialist
Labour League

copies to:

All IC organizations, T.Wohlforth, J.Robertson, A.Fox, E.Germain,
J. Hansen.

New York, N.Y.

27 May 1963

G. Healy,
National Secretary, SLL:

Dear comrade Healy,

Thank you for sending me a copy of your letter of 22 May received today to comrade Dobbs. I have a request to ask of you in view of the following considerations: (1) that the letter refers to our tendency grouping (i.e., the Revolutionary Tendency, or 'Mage-Robertson-White'); (2) that the letter together with its appendices is lengthy--making recopying difficult; (3) that it is mimeographed so presumably you can easily have extra copies available. Therefore would you be so good as to send copies of this material to several of our leading comrades: Shane Mage, ..., New York City; Shirley Stoute, ..., Philadelphia; and Geoffrey White, ..., Berkeley (2 copies).

I was concerned to note that in your letter to comrade Dobbs you clearly imply that our tendency is among those who 'do not carry out seriously the work of the national sections' and that it is this issue which precipitated the split by Philips-Wohlforth from the Revolutionary Tendency in this country. Our comrades will deeply resent your bringing this unfounded accusation to the SWP leadership. I want to point out that your open endorsement of this charge of unseriousness towards the SWP lends special weight to the charge and encourages the use of organizational measures against us by the SWP tops.

If you should persist in making such statements concerning us to the American Majority, I fear we would be compelled to make our own disclosures to the entire SWP membership as to our reasons for refusing to sign your 'Reorganizing' statement. I refer of course to our views as expressed in our correspondence exchanges with you extending through Nov. and Dec. of last year.

I know it is the deep-seated hope of every comrade in our tendency that relations between the SLL and ourselves improve instead of worsening and that, above all, they not become embittered as a result of incidents such as I am objecting to. Nothing will or can be gained, comrade Healy, for our shared basic programmatic outlook, by 'washing our dirty linen' before larger circles in the radical movement. I note that comrade Kerry in his recent polemical attack upon us all ('Unprincipled Combinationism--Past and Present'), spent nearly a page in attempting to do nothing other than to draw us into making public attacks upon one another.

Our comrades will naturally be appreciative of your other remark to the effect that you are prepared to defend us against unjustified organizational measures by the SWP Majority. I see this as being in contradiction to propagating views about our unseriousness which can only prepare the ground for organizational reprisals against us based upon falsehoods.

Fraternally, James Robertson

cc: S.Mage, S.Stoute, G.White, T.Wohlforth

COPY/VM

29th May, 1963.

Farrell Dobbs,
Secretary, SWP

Dear Comrade,

It has been brought to our notice that the following paragraph of our letter to you of May 22 which reads:

'We are not sympathetic to minorities who do not carry out seriously the work of the national sections, even if they support us politically. When comrade Fox came here last autumn, we assisted him in drafting the memorandum which was presented to you on November 13, 1962.'

could be misconstrued to suggest that the Robertson-Mage 'Revolutionary tendency' has not carried out the work required by the SWP.

Although they do not adhere to the memorandum of November 13 'Reorganization of the Minority Tendency' we have every reason to believe that they have carried out their work as good members of your party.

We reaffirm that should any action be taken against them for furthering the international discussion, we shall give them our fullest support.

Yours fraternally,

G. HEALY

National Secretary

VM/H

29th May, 1963.

Dear Comrade Robertson,

Enclosed is a copy of a letter we have sent to Dobbs which should clear up any misunderstanding that might arise from this paragraph.

So far as we are concerned, you are at perfect liberty at any time to publish any correspondence you have had with us. This is not 'dirty linen' as you suggest but a record of our attempt to improve the work of the minority tendency in the SWP.

We resent very much threats such as you utter, especially since they appear to imply that our intervention last winter was some sort of conspiracy.

Yours fraternally,

G. HEALY

National Secretary

GH/VM
Enc.

PARTY AND CLASS

A Statement on the Pre-Convention Discussion by the
Reorganized Minority Tendency

(reprinted from SWP Discussion Bulletin, Vol.24, No.27, June 1963)

Why the Factional Attack?

Our political tendency has produced two major documents in preparation for this pre-convention discussion: 'Decline of American Imperialism and the Tasks of the SWP' and 'The Rebuilding of the Fourth International.' These documents present the main outlines of the political line that we wish the party to adopt both in its approach to the American scene and to the problems of the international movement. In essence our material calls for a return to a revolutionary outlook which relies upon the proletariat as the only truly revolutionary class in modern society, which sees the need of our international movement to become the leadership of the proletariat, and which today seeks to deepen the roots of our cadres in the class itself.

The response of the majority leadership to our political proposals has been a wholesale and uncontrolled factional attack of such a nature as our movement has never seen. No serious answers are put forward to our political criticisms--only heated factional attacks on the members of our tendency, their nefarious pasts, their bad writing styles, etc., etc. Everything is done to confuse and obscure our political positions and an atmosphere is being created where serious discussion of any issue is made all but impossible.

Perhaps if the majority leadership felt that our group threatened to seize control of the party nationally one could understand the intensity of the factional attack. But all the comrades know this is absurd. Ours is a very small group which represents no threat whatsoever organizationally to the party nationally or in any local. All we have is our political ideas and a bare scattering of people who support them. Certainly considering the strength of our group, the action of the national party leadership to perpetrate a deep factional crisis in the party seems unreal, irrational.

Then why the attack? Why the intense heat, the personal acrimony, the vicious polemic? We can only conclude that it is that one strength we do have, our political ideas, which is cutting too deep into the central weakness of the majority, its political confusion. This is the only logical conclusion we can reach. Thus the factional reaction of the majority leadership to the presentation of our political point of view tends to substantiate our own analysis of the party--that today it is in a serious crisis because of its political confusion and its partial isolation from the mass movement.

What is it that we want?

Comrade Kerry and others have suggested that our main reason for existence is to criticize or attack Cuba. But then why do we seem to be going to such lengths to avoid centering the discussion on Cuba if this is what is 'bugging' us? Comrade Dobbs thinks perhaps after all we are Cochranites as well as Shachtmanites, Marcyites and Johnsonites and are out to dump our election campaigns. Then why have our comrades worked so hard and dedicatedly in all party election campaigns? No, we are for election campaigns. We want them deepened by directing them towards the working class and Negro people. Comrade Dobbs then goes on to suggest that we agree 'on only one thing--the party leadership should be removed and they, or at least the slickest of them, should take the helm.' But this is not our position. We do not wish to dump anybody. All we want is a discussion of our political point of view. Along the same lines is Comrade Dobbs' suggestion that we wish to fight the 'bureaucratic jungle.' We do not consider the party a bureaucratic jungle nor are we interested in organizing battles against the leadership. We have sought, to the best of our ability, to assiduously avoid such battles, and have disassociated ourselves from those interested in such a course.

We are interested in none of these things. We urge all those comrades who really wish to discover what we really want to turn to our own political material and read what we propose for the line of the party. This is one place where the party majority leadership seems most reluctant to look to discover what we advocate.

We have important differences around three central questions before the convention. Primary, for some time has been the international question. It is our opinion that the party majority has gone over to the essential method and outlook of Pabloism on the international plane. The Pabloite outlook seeks to substitute reliance upon petty bourgeois forces--such as the Stalinist parties, centrist groups, and 'sui-generis jacobins' in the colonial areas--for the struggle of the proletariat itself under Marxist leadership in the revolutionary process. This outlook of Pabloism is reflected at different times in different ways but always the one force the Pabloites never really rely upon is the working class. Thus we have seen an erosion of the role of the party and the working class in the international outlook of the majority under the influence of the Pabloites. (For a summary of our views on this question see our resolution 'The Rebuilding of the Fourth International'.)

This outlook has also begun to cut deeply into the domestic perspective of the party. This process has not gone anywhere near as far as the erosion of the international outlook of the party and thus the party is a very different organization than the little petty bourgeois Pabloite groups in Europe. But in many ways this partial erosion of the party's American revolutionary perspective is more serious, and should cause greater concern to the rank and file, than the erosion of its international outlook. It is the relationship of a party to the struggles of the class in its own country which is the real 'acid test' of any revolutionary group.

Our differences on this level are expressed most sharply in the counterposition of our resolution on the American question with that of the majority's. The majority resolution contains much good material. Like our document, it recognizes the turn in the objective situation in the United States, which after years of deep isolation, now opens up for our party serious possibilities of fruitful work in the mass movement. However, the majority draws no new conclusions from this as far as the orientation of party work is concerned. Instead they propose a 'general propaganda offensive'--the same proposal which they presented in the middle of the deepest McCarthyite reaction. Thus the majority, while recognizing the turn in the objective situation, proposes no real turn in party work. But it is precisely in deepening the roots of our party in the class, that is becoming part of the class, that our party can be revitalized after 15 years of isolation when, through no fault of our own, our precious proletarian cadres were seriously depleted. It is our conviction that it has been this partial isolation of the party from the class which has prepared the party for its present retreat to the Pabloite revisionism it fought so hard against ten years ago.

The majority leadership not only does not accept our proposal for a serious turn in party work in the direction of the mass movement but it attacks us factionally for raising this proposal and caricatures what we have to say by calling us 'whirling dervishes.' It seems our document is asking too much of our overworked forces. It is too much to expect the locals to make work in the trade unions central to our work and at the same time give work in the Negro movement (and among the Spanish minorities where they exist) an important place in party work. If one views the mass movement as a whole from a class perspective then the problem is not so difficult. Our work in the Negro movement and among Puerto Ricans and Mexicans can be immensurably strengthened by developing our roots in the trade unions and within the trade unions establishing relations with militant Negroes or other minority peoples. Thus our work in the class becomes an important link for our work in the mass movement as a whole.

The problem is not a matter of the smallness of the size of our cadre but rather how this cadre is utilized. Today our cadre devotes its greatest efforts to 'party building' work far removed from the masses and to work in petty bourgeois circles. Can we be complacent about the situation in the party when in the New York Local only one comrade has any real connections with the Negro movement? It is no accident that this comrade is a trade unionist and is dissatisfied with the direction of current party work. We are afraid, comrades, that this is no time to run a holding operation. The objective situation compels us to do more.

Our differences on the Negro question are closely linked with our differences on the American question as a whole. In the first place we doubt if the party will seriously turn towards real intervention in depth in the Negro movement when it maintains

an outlook of limiting our approach to the mass movement as a whole to a 'general propaganda offensive.' We feel we must do more in the Negro movement than 'propagandize.' Secondly, we feel the resolution is deficient because it does not give proper emphasis to Southern work. We are convinced a small beginning can be made in Southern work by some of our younger cadres without seriously weakening our work among Northern Negroes or our work in general. Finally, while correctly assessing the progressive aspects of the growing nationalist sentiment among the Negro people, the resolution fails to see a need for working class leadership of the Negro movement itself. Rather many comrades are now putting forward the concept that the present petty bourgeois Negro leadership will be 'impelled' to go over to socialism and thus will not need replacing at all. This is a deep distortion of our theory of the permanent revolution which sees national struggles going over into socialist struggles only under proletarian leadership. Thus we see in the concrete how revisionism on the international level eats away at the American perspective of the party. If there is no need for a new proletarian Negro leadership--in program and composition--then there is no role in the Negro movement for our party and its leadership as the most advanced section of the working class, Negro and white.

We can therefore see how the majority, beginning with a decay of the role of class and party internationally under Pabloite influence today, sees no need for a serious turn towards the class in its party building work nor a real role for class and party in the Negro struggle. It is this erosion of the role of class and party which necessitated the formation of our political tendency. It is this class struggle outlook that today we are fighting for. It is this which motivates us--it is this which is our essence. We feel close to all comrades who agree even partially on these two critical questions. We have nothing in common with all those who totally reject this outlook, regardless of their position on more abstract questions. Thus we will bloc with anyone who favors this outlook and we will fight politically anyone who deserts it. This is the principled and sole basis for all our political relations within the party and internationally.

The Split with the Robertson Group

The majority comrades have challenged us to explain the basis for our split with the Robertson group. Of course the rank and file comrades have a right to know why this split occurred and what were the political questions which brought it about. Our tendency is an open political group and all its actions are based on political considerations. We are not interested in conspiracies or games of any kind. We feel the situation within the party is too grave to permit anything but the most serious, objective and political relations between all party members.

In fact we feel there may be some value, some lessons the party rank and file can learn from our experiences; from, frankly speaking, our serious difficulties. This is especially true

because the split within our tendency was caused by the very same kind of political considerations which necessitated the formation of a tendency to begin with--the questions of party and class. Perhaps the comrades can get some deeper insight into these two critical questions by studying the extremely difficult crisis our tendency passed through.

The crisis within our tendency was precipitated by a single event in New York and then spread to involve a number of related issues. A minority comrade, Judy McGill, had a trade union difference with the party branch. When the branch voted against her position, she walked out of the party. Some in our tendency supported her desertion from the party and others expressed sympathy for her action. This created a dangerous situation within the tendency and raised the questions as to whether or not the tendency members fully understood the assessment of the party we made in our basic platform 'For a Revolutionary Perspective.' This document reaffirmed our loyal support to the party and our conviction that the party as a whole could be won over to a correct political perspective precisely through a process of its healthy growth. Thus minority comrades should be the most dedicated builders of the party and have the conviction that the working class cadres of the party could and would be won over to our ideas. In order to clarify matters Comrade Wohlforth submitted a memorandum to the tendency 'On Orientation' last May which reaffirmed these points and condemned any concept of taking the discipline of the party lightly (See Appendix 1)[see Marxist Bulletin No.2].

This statement precipitated a deep internal crisis in our tendency which lasted from May until November when it was resolved through the reorganization of the tendency around a new statement on this question (See Discussion Bulletin, Vol. 24, No. 10)[Marxist Bulletin No.3-I, page 23]. It became clear to us that a section of our tendency had simply written off the party as a whole without a serious struggle to reorient over a period of time the best working class cadres of the party. In addition they displayed no serious interest in the work of our party in the mass movement and instead sought to retreat into a comfortable 'study circle.' And finally their evolution seemed at that time to be propelling them rapidly in the direction of a split from the party. The appended material 'Towards the Working Class' by Comrade Wohlforth and a letter to Comrade Wohlforth from Comrade Philips should explain clearly the way we viewed the differences within the tendency at that time (see Appendix 2 and 3)[see Marxist Bulletin No.2].

Thus it appeared to us that a section of our tendency had no real understanding of the question of party and class. They wrote off the party as it existed in reality in this country, gave it the back of their hand, and substituted for the party their own little circle. They displayed not the slightest real interest in reaching the working class either through the party, or since they had written the party off, then on their own. Thus having turned their backs on both party and class, they were, in our opinion, a petty bourgeois tendency. Despite

their formal agreement with us on a number of questions it was clear to us that there was no principled basis for further collaboration with them as long as they persisted on their course. Even though it meant the loss of half of our minority we had no other course open to us but to reorganize the tendency on a sound basis of a real understanding in the concrete of the importance of party and class. Even if we had to reorganize out of the tendency 99 per cent of the tendency we would have done so if there was no longer any principled basis for collaboration. There is no other course that principled people can take.

Following the split we devoted our efforts to positive party building work and later to the preparation of our political material for the pre-convention discussion as well. We had presented to the National Committee our own statement explaining where we stood and we expected that the Robertson group would make their own position clear to the party. They never did this. But we wished no further factional conflict with the Robertson group and hoped that our action would have an impact on them and that they would reconsider their course in time.

A number of individuals who refused to sign our reorganizational statement did leave the party in the interim--four comrades who signed the Robertson statement on Cuba and two comrades who refused to sign either statement. But the bulk of the Robertson tendency seemed to pull back from a split course. This to us was a welcome sign and it opened up the possibility that these comrades would reconsider their whole approach towards the party and the class. We did our best in the New York local to keep factional pressure off them and were very much opposed to the factional attacks the majority leadership levelled against them. We felt then, as we feel now, these comrades should be dealt with politically and not organizationally and every effort should be made to integrate them in party work and to assist them to learn from their mistakes.

In fact with the publication of our convention material we sent these comrades a letter soliciting their opinion of our material to see if the passage of time had led to any possible political collaboration between the tendencies. We were not too optimistic about the sort of answer we would get because, while the Robertson group seemed to have pulled back from a split course, there had been no indication in the preceding period of a serious attempt on the part of these comrades to break out of their little circle existence to become a real part of the party, and to relate themselves to any party work in the mass movement. In fact the group in New York seemed to be interested in the City College and Columbia campus community and little else. The main proposal for local party work presented by these comrades since the split in the tendency was a special orientation towards the Maoist Progressive Labor group, also largely rooted on the campuses.

We never formally received an answer to our letter from the Robertson group. However, in the interim the Robertson group

has made its position clear on our fundamental resolution on the American question by rejecting support to this resolution in favor of amending the PC Draft Resolution. This is an important political step especially considering that this group's general approach to the pre-convention period has been to vote against everything the majority presents as a matter of principle, almost. While this amendment, like the resolution it is amending, pays lip service to the need for more work in the mass movement, it does not oppose the main orientation of the majority which is simply to continue 'propaganda work.' Thus it clearly rejects our proposal for a serious turn in party work making mass work our central task.

The importance of this basic difference we have with the Robertson group can be seen from the following statement made by Robertson in the first draft of an answer to our letter to them--an answer we never formally received. Robertson states:

"We see one essential defect in your convention material. It is common and basic to both your American and International resolution. This erroneous outlook is expressed clearly and briefly in two places. It is found in Section 3 of your International draft and in point 1 of the Philips amendment at the last plenum. This amendment was endorsed and appended to your American resolution. We do not believe that the way to combat the revisionists' surrender of a strategic perspective of proletarian revolution is by counterposing a demand for the Trotskyists to undertake (everywhere and with forces no matter how small!) immediate agitational struggles of the working masses. This is a call which perhaps corresponds to felt inner-factional needs but which lacks reality. Your posing of our immediate task in every country as 'the conquest of the masses' creates an enormous discrepancy between this declared task and our means. It is a slide into a sectarianism which tends to cut the movement off from opportunities as they are--witness your indifference bordering on hostility toward developing an approach to the 'Progressive Labor' left breakaway from the American CP. Thus you did not support our memorandum on the 'P.L.' group. The general, but not sole or universal, perspective which the present world juncture demands, in our opinion, is one which places major emphasis on propagandistic work toward the crystallization of Trotskyist cadres. Today in most parts of the world our task is to lay down the foundations for revolutionary parties, not to pretend they already exist and declare 'they' should struggle for hegemony over the mass movement."

It is clear from the above that Robertson sees his differences with us on this score as 'essential' and not a minor matter. But what are the views which Comrade Robertson thinks are so bad?

Point 1 of the concluding section of the Philips amendment simply stated,

"The party and its press must take a conscious turn towards the main arena of our work, the politically unawakened workers of the mass production industries."

If our main organ is not to be written so that it can be understood by workers, then who should it be written for? We can only conclude that Robertson wants the Militant written for the people he is working among--petty bourgeois radicals and students. We feel that the ISR should be able to amply fill this need and our main organ should be written so that working class and Negro militants can understand it for it is precisely the workers and minority peoples who we wish our party to seek to reach.

Section 8 of our International Resolution reads as follows:

"While the concrete analysis and tasks will differ widely from country to country, certain general tasks will be necessary everywhere. We must understand that this is a transitional period to a new period of upsurge rather than being either a period of the 'organic expansion' of capitalism or of renewed revolutionary upsurge. Thus our tasks remain essentially preparatory in nature. Or to pose it in its classic form, our task now is not the conquest of state power but the conquest of the masses in preparation for the conquest of state power. Everywhere and in all countries our cadres must break away from the routine habits of propaganda group existence and reach out, no matter how meagre our forces may be, to establish contact with the masses themselves on whatever political level this can be done. This must be the main orientation of the whole international movement and the major task of each national section. Those sections which do not attempt such work will quickly find themselves bypassed by developments during the period of revolutionary upsurge."

Clearly this section does not suggest that our small forces should expect to achieve hegemony over the mass in the coming period--only that we should strive in that direction rather than seek hegemony over petty bourgeois radical circles as some of the majority are advocating. And what concretely do we propose? To 'seek to establish contact with the masses themselves on whatever political level this can be done.' We can only conclude that it is this proposal which Comrade Robertson is rejecting.

We are afraid that Comrade Robertson does not understand in the slightest what the entire national and international struggle is all about. He does not view our propaganda work and party building work as intimately linked with our work to increase our influence in the class itself. Rather he seems to subscribe to the view of the most disoriented among the majority that today we must concentrate on 'the crystallization of Trotskyist cadres' far removed from the masses and later on we are to present ourselves to these masses as their chosen leaders. Such an outlook is a truly sectarian one for it is sectarian towards the class itself. No matter how 'orthodox' comrades may be, they will

not be able to seriously contribute to the rebuilding of our international movement as long as they continue to see the building of our cadres as a process essentially isolated from the class itself. Those rank and file comrades of the majority, confused as they may be on the international question, who seek in some fashion to root the party in the class have a better understanding of the real task of rebuilding our movement than these comrades have.

We can only conclude from this whole experience that the Robertson group is not seriously interested in, or capable of, assisting the process of reorienting our movement here or internationally and that our collaboration with these comrades in a political struggle against the majority is out of the question. The group in a lightminded way has written off the party as 'right-centrist' without making a serious attempt to reorient it, has retreated into an essentially petty bourgeois little 'study circle', and now openly rejects the need for our party and our whole world cadres to turn its major attention to work in the class itself.

However, while political collaboration is out of the question, we do believe these comrades seriously seek to remain in the party and have shown willingness to carry out their responsibilities towards the party. Therefore, we continue to oppose any factional pressure or organizational attacks on this group and feel that they should be answered politically. The majority is, of course, hindered in answering these comrades politically precisely because it also resists a turn of the party towards the class.

Our Relations With the British and the French

Our relations with the British and French sections of the IC, of course, flow naturally from our whole political outlook. These relations are essentially those of political solidarity which has been declared and defended openly in front of the party as a whole. Such political relations have a deep tradition in our world movement for we consider ourselves to be politically in solidarity with a world movement--not an isolated national party.

These relations flow essentially from our common outlook on these critical questions of class and party. Clearly we have defended the same general international outlook as expressed most comprehensively in the SLL International Resolution 'World Prospects for Socialism.' But the matter goes even deeper than that. These two sections of the IC are sections which are themselves deeply rooted in the class in their own countries and which maintain within their particular countries, under conditions peculiar to each country, the same general orientation which we are fighting for here. The success of this orientation can be seen especially in the case of the British section which has developed under a more favorable objective situation than either the French or our party have been favored with.

In addition, as extremely serious political groups, these comrades agree with our approach towards responsible, loyal work as members of the SWP and our political solidarity is based in part on their acceptance of this strategic outlook just as we agree with their general international outlook. Thus there is no conflict whatsoever between our political solidarity with this international tendency and our complete, loyal, positive approach to the party here despite our deep differences with the leadership. If there was any question of this it is made explicitly clear in a recent letter of Comrade Healy to Comrade Dobbs.

Of course there are political differences between our tendency and the British and the French. These differences however are within a common perspective of maintaining a revolutionary role for the working class and a role for our movement as its vanguard. These comrades do not dictate policy to us and we do not dictate policy to them. Our relations are solely political and our differences are openly expressed before the movement. We are proud of our relations with these groups and feel there is much we have to learn both from their struggles and the struggles and experiences of our party here over the years.

An Unprincipled Combination?

Much is being made by the majority of the theoretical differences within our minority. How can we maintain a common bloc in the party if we are made up essentially of a group of comrades who maintain an orthodox outlook on the Russian question in a bloc with a group of comrades who have traditionally maintained a state capitalist position within the party?

We feel that the internal experiences of our tendency have a certain bearing on an answer to this question. It was not the Russian question nor the Cuban question which split our tendency. Important as these theoretical questions are, our tendency was split down the middle when the questions of class and party were touched. This is the most acid of all tests; it is the concrete test of what different theories mean to political groups.

The split in 1940 was caused, so it appeared on the surface, by the Russian question. But it cut deeper than that. Behind the facade of difference over this question (or more accurately the question of defense of the USSR during the Soviet-Finnish War), a section of the party was capitulating to alien class pressures and abandoning the building of a proletarian party.

The Johnsonites rejoined the SWP in 1947 despite disagreement on the Russian question, because they agreed with the party on the critical question of class and party. When they later left the party in 1950 their leaving was caused not simply by the important differences over the Russian question but because, under the pressure of prosperity they had abandoned the need for a party and given up on the class.

A small group of these comrades, the Philips group, refused to go along with their co-thinkers on the Russian question precisely because they maintained a revolutionary class perspective. In 1952, a section of the party, the Cochranites, who had complete agreement with the majority on the class nature of the USSR, prepared to desert the movement and the present party leadership collaborated with the Philips group in a struggle against them precisely around the issues of party and class.

In 1957 a minority opposition formed inside the Shachtmanite youth organization to struggle against Shachtman's final capitulation over the central issues of party and class. This struggle, carried on in close collaboration with the SWP leadership, was conducted by a group which did not have agreement within itself on the Russian question even though leading comrades like Comrades Mage and Wohlforth came over to an orthodox position on this question during the course of the struggle. After the split in the YSL, the group fused with the SWP youth to form the basic cadre of a new youth movement, again even though important sociological differences remained.

Today our common bloc of the reorganized minority is based on deep agreement on precisely these questions of class and party. In the period prior to last November it was revealed that there was no agreement on these critical questions and without hesitation we split with half of our tendency. Should our theoretical differences lead to a difference on class and party we would not hesitate to split again. But this is not on the agenda precisely because the comrades involved in our tendency have proved their seriousness on this score through long years of work in building our party in the class itself.

Our tendency does not need to explain its principled basis for existence. Our documents and our own actions prove this to the hilt. But are we hiding our differences that we have among ourselves? Of course not. Comrade Philips' full state capitalist position is available in two long bulletins issued in 1957. Comrade Philips is presently working on a reevaluation of position but the pressures of his trade union work have not given him the necessary time to complete it. Do the comrades suggest he abandon this trade union work in order to work on a new thesis? In any event, even if Comrade Philips were to maintain every word of the position he put forward in 1957 his role as a part of the reorganized tendency is perfectly in order and principled.

Is Comrade Wohlforth holding back his views or has he sold out to Comrade Philips? But Comrade Wohlforth has just published a lengthy analysis of the Cuba question which not only reasserts an orthodox theory of the Russian question but utilizes as its theoretical taking off point precisely Trotsky's polemics against Shachtman. These ex-Shachtmanites sure are devious. They insist on expressing their Shachtmanite character by conducting a fundamental struggle against Shachtman in his own youth organization in full collaboration with the SWP. Once inside the SWP they assist in building a new revolutionary youth movement.

They then put forward the 'well known Shachtmanite theory' on the importance of the mass movement. Finally they base their present theoretical deviations on Trotsky's polemics against Shachtman. Not only that they succeed in dominating our minority with a grand total of three ex-Shachtmanites, none of whom spent more than two years in the Shachtmanite youth (one of them fighting Shachtman) and none of whom even got into the ISL. Very, very devious people indeed!

On Loyalty and Party Building

Every comrade in the party who knows or who has worked with supporters of the reorganized minority tendency knows that there has never been a question on either point for us. Our comrades have worked hard and loyally to build the party despite factional problems and despite our disagreement with the majority line of the party. Perhaps comrades who never have been in a minority do not realize it, but this is not an easy thing to do. It is much easier to give up your ideas and 'live and let live' in the party or to write off the party and retreat into a little circle. We have insisted all along, despite the difficulties involved, on both energetic party building work and political struggle against a political line in our party which we feel is doing real deep harm to our party

This has been our perspective and it will continue to be our perspective. To even raise such questions about our comrades is to us simply uncontrolled factionalism.

Our position on a split from the party is equally clear. We have fought ardently against such a course and have broken with anyone who considers such a course. We hope that those comrades who now question us on this point are not doing so because they wish in fact we would split. Certainly the factional tenor of the discussion seems to be aimed at pushing us to that conclusion. Well, we simply are not going to be pushed by anyone. The comrades can say what they will, we still intend to stay in the party and loyally work to build it--no matter what. If we are ever thrown out of this party it will be because of our political ideas--not our actions. This is something that every party member who knows us, knows.

How can you be loyal to the party and still at the same time make such harsh characterizations of the party leadership, comrades seem to be asking? In fact Comrade Dobbs expresses the same thought this way: "There isn't much of a hint of responsibility toward the party contained in the closing sentence of the Wohlforth-Philips opus. 'It is the duty of every revolutionist in the party,' they assert, 'to struggle uncompromisingly for a return of the party to a working class line internationally and an orientation of intervention into the mass movement within this country.'" We feel the comrades here are confusing two things--loyalty towards the party and loyalty towards the political line of the majority grouping within the party. The

two are not identical. Precisely because we feel our loyalty to the party so deeply we feel we must struggle uncompromisingly against the political line of the majority grouping because that line is severely damaging our party and world movement. However, because we are Bolsheviks and believe in democratic centralism we limit this struggle to the periods of pre-convention discussion and at all times loyally build the party as it is with its present political line which we defend in public against all opponents of the party. Once there is a total identification of loyalty to a party with loyalty to a particular political leadership of a party, then democratic centralism ends--there is no real possibility of loyal opposition to the policies of the leadership. That is not our tradition.

Will we abide by the decisions of the convention? Of course! Including the proposed split with the IC? Despite our strong opposition to this step, certainly. All we ask is to be allowed to loyally work in helping to build the party. Will we maintain our political views and fight for them within the party? You can bet your life we will! In the meantime world events and the experiences of the party in its work in this country can only strengthen our political outlook and lead to increased support for our ideas within the party. The growth of the movement can only aid the healthy forces within the party.

--June 21, 1963

DISCIPLINE AND TRUTH -- Reply to Wohlforth

--by Mage, Robertson and White for the Minority Tendency
(reprinted from SWP Discussion Bulletin, Vol.24, No.30, July 1963)

It has come to our attention that comrade Wohlforth has submitted for bulletin publication an article, 'Party and Class,' which in part seeks to justify to the Majority the split by Philips and Wohlforth from the Minority Tendency last Fall.

Plainly Philips and Wohlforth feel hard pressed and organizationally threatened in the course of the current pre-Convention discussion period. Understandably, they want to make us the target of the Majority instead. Were they to employ arguments and mere invective in this pursuit, well and good--it would be their privilege to try to save themselves at the expense of former collaborators. But they have done something more. We also find that appended to the Wohlforth piece is an earlier, inner-Tendency document of his entitled 'Toward the Working Class,' dated October 2, 1962.

This earlier article purported to present as well as polemicize against views advanced by Jim Robertson and Larry Ireland. In seeking to score his points Wohlforth made statements denying the acceptance and practice of party discipline by Robertson and Ireland. The most conspicuous of these accusations are the following:

'Rejecting party building and rejecting party discipline because the party is dominated by centrist elements leads logically to only one conclusion--splitting from the party. But these comrades do not openly advocate such a course.'

'They urge our tendency to take young fresh elements, indoctrinate them with our views (in a careful manner of course so as not to get 'caught') and then sneak them into the party and into the tendency.'

'We reject any concept of playing games with party discipline, sneaking people into the party, functioning in an undisciplined way when the majority isn't looking or not present (why else the concern to be active where they are not?).'

'For us to consider opening up our tendency to non-party members is simply to invite disciplinary action from the majority. This is clearly an action in violation of the statutes of our party.'

'I have no intention of participating in any meeting at which internal party matters are discussed in front of non-party members.'

Finally, Wohlforth makes a summation as follows:

'The Robertson-Ireland orientation, taken as a whole, has an internal logic to it that the authors may only be partially aware of, or not aware. To state it openly and plainly theirs is a split perspective. A tendency which rejects party discipline (even if only partially) and party building, which seeks to sneak people into the party, which functions in part as an independent entity, which carries on an organizational faction war within the party, which, in violation of party statutes includes non-party members, which is so deeply alienated and isolated from the party ranks that it has in fact already split in content if not yet in form--such a tendency is going down a road which must inevitably lead to a split from the party.'

These statements and any other similar ones about the 'indiscipline' of Robertson, Ireland, and by implication of the entire Tendency they support, are--to say it plainly--lies, done in desperation then and repeated in desperation now.

Then, Wohlforth went from being our principal Minority spokesman to facing the threat of losing in an unfolding inner-Tendency discussion. This he couldn't take. In a vain effort to dump his opponents and rally a majority of the Tendency around himself and his new political mentor, Philips, Wohlforth created the myth of our splitting from the party to cover his own very tangible, but unprincipled, break from the Tendency. To give credence to his accusations of split, he had to back it up by inventing horror stories, intended for distant consumption, about our anti-party activities. Very few Tendency comrades proved to be gullible; most learned how little trust to place in a snarling Wohlforth backed into a corner.

Now, the Philips-Wohlforth group faces a grim picture all around. It is not enough for them that they face severe difficulties of their own--and in connection with which we aim to be second to none in the party in fighting for the scrupulous protection of these comrades' democratic party rights, whatever they have done to us notwithstanding.

The other vexing problem for the AP-TW group is that no matter how much they verbally banish us we don't disappear up some academic smokestack in accordance with their incantations. Instead the Minority Tendency stabilized itself early after the split, did a creditable and responsible job in presenting several carefully worked out documents containing its views to the party for convention consideration, and by its seriousness and integrity won as supporters comrades in the New York party local who stood between the two groupings. All this adds up to an intolerable situation for the Philips-Wohlforth group.

There is a rule in political life that controls the evolving relationship between larger and smaller competing and politically similar groupings. The only way the smaller can grow at the expense of the larger is if it has something decisive to offer politically and has a pro-unity stance toward the larger. Otherwise the size gap will remain or grow. But in the present case we are larger, our political line on questions tends to be better (or at least not downright peculiar--compare our view of Cuba as a deformed workers state with Wohlforth's odd obsession that it's an eroded, decomposed capitalist phantom state--and God only knows what Philips thinks!). Moreover we recognize that the split in the Left Minority was unprincipled and unjustified. We favor working to heal it.

In addition at least a few words should be said about working class composition and orientation to supplement the views expressed in our International resolution and American amendment. Wohlforth has written an incredible number of words about fusing, melting, merging, rooting, and blending with the innermost essential central kernel and core of the American workers; and Philips is projected as the great workers' leader--a second Bill Haywood. But, comrades, for all this the working-class composition shows no noticeable difference between the two groupings! (Not yet, that is; we mean what we say about developing a modest, but real root here or there in the Trade Union movement and under party guidance.)

So it is that we pose an uncontrollable and ever growing threat to the viability of the AP-TW grouping. In 'Party and Class' plus appendages they have now played their last card in a blatant effort to politically kill us, to cause us to be driven from the party as hated wreckers.

The Evidence

We are not at all interested in carrying old inner-Tendency disputes to the Majority or involving it in our arguments with Wohlforth. However, we find it necessary to introduce certain materials for examination by the party membership in order for it to verify the correctness of our accusation that Wohlforth lies in seeking to draw fire from himself and onto us.

The first piece of evidence appended is a lengthy circular letter of October 18, 1961, by Robertson in which he criticizes Wohlforth's stewardship of the Minority since the previous Convention and proposes a new course [see Marxist Bulletin No.2,p.1]. Throughout, the letter is written in an impersonal, un factional vein without mentioning whose line and whose errors are being dealt with. The viewpoint of this letter found a majority of supporters among New York Minority comrades and from that time, in disputed issues, Wohlforth was in a minority within the Tendency locally. All this took place six months before the incident came up which Wohlforth claims precipitated inner-Tendency factionalism. Perhaps the most central and controlling idea in the Robertson letter as a whole is the point made in the following paragraph:

'At bottom, the reason I hold a perspective of struggle against split from the SWP is because the party is far from one in which all the revolutionary juices have been drained. Factionalism now is linked with and only has use in a split perspective. In the past few years the party has begun to react to opportunities by turning each one into a cycle of opportunism until the given opening is exhausted. Each time a selection takes place, some--notably the Weiss grouping--get worse and move toward liquidationism, but others react and are impelled in a leftward direction. This process has just begun, if one stops to view the SWP historically. There are two roads open. Either each wave of oppositionals will let themselves get washed out of the party, making it ever harder for succeeding left-wingers, or each opportunist venture into fresh fields will augment the revolutionary Marxists with additional forces.'

The second item is a hasty letter by Robertson written nearly a year later, October 7, 1962 [see Marxist Bulletin No.3-I, p.1]. This letter contains the writer's first reactions upon seeing the Wohlforth 'Toward the Working Class'. At that time and within the Tendency, the Robertson letter made a detailed, indignant and emphatic denial of accusations of breaking party discipline. Moreover it offered an analysis of Wohlforth's purposes in making such charges.

The most obvious, even monumental, contradiction with reality in Wohlforth's accusations is the simple, elementary fact that 'freed' from the 'party loyal' Philips and Wohlforth, the Minority did not move an inch toward splitting from the SWP! Even with no lack of encouragement to leave from the Majority, our perspective of remaining a part of the SWP is unimpaired. What then must one necessarily make of these accusations that were the foundation to the claim that we were 'going down a road which must inevitably lead to a split from the party'?

There is one other little point which should not escape the comrades' notice. The Wohlforth piece, 'Party and Class,' went into the bulletin with such timing that in the normal course of events we would not have seen it until after the July 3 deadline for bulletin material--too late for us to reply. Even now we are only able to make the most limited, essential, and hasty answer. But hasty or not, there is one thing that had better be clear. We warn the Philips-Wohlforth group that with their latest substitution of slander in place of politics, our patience is now at an end. Should we be the butt of any further conduct along these lines, our reply will not be circumspect.

Conclusion

On March 25 of this year we had occasion to make a statement to the party leadership. We want to reaffirm and repeat here our declaration which concluded that earlier statement:

'The Minority declares:

1- that it has and will strictly abide by the democratic-centralist practices, discipline, and responsibilities normal to the Trotskyist movement;

2- that it will not surrender the necessary and essential attributes and functions of an organized and internally democratic tendency;

3- that it recognizes the right of existence as an organized tendency is only justified by the most serious political differences such as all sides acknowledge exist within the party today.'

July 2, 1963

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