



# discussion bulletin

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## CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
THE POLITICAL SITUATION AND PARTY TASKS (Political Report to the Eighteenth National Convention)	
By Farrell Dobbs	1
YOUTH REPORT TO EIGHTEENTH NATIONAL CONVENTION	
By Tim Wohlforth	16

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THE POLITICAL SITUATION AND PARTY TASKS  
(Political Report to the Eighteenth National Convention)

By Farrell Dobbs

Comrades: As you are all aware the Draft Political Resolution on which the report will be based deals primarily with the present conjuncture in this country. As you are further aware, the draft has been substantially revised to meet changing realities in the conjuncture since it was first prepared last February. Since that time, the outcome of the 1958 election campaigns has become more evident with regard to its effects on those with whom we have established fraternal relations in the regroupment milieu. In February the unemployed protest movement was gathering momentum but the subsequent economic trend has taken a great deal of the steam out of that protest action. The draft has therefore been revised to take cognizance of this change in circumstances.

About ten days before the convention, Comrades Cannon, Swabeck and Warde, National Committee members from Los Angeles, came to New York for a series of discussions with the members of the Secretariat of the Political Committee. We found that we had a common view as to the nature of the change in the conjuncture, its significance, its meaning to the party. We designated a working sub-committee to prepare the revised draft. That draft was brought to the pre-convention Plenum, discussed briefly yesterday, and approved by the Plenum in its general line.

Comrade Cannon brought with him a transcript of a speech he delivered to the Los Angeles local. He made the transcript available to me in preparing the political report and I've drawn material from it in dealing with the basic evaluation of the regroupment experience. It is the general aim of the draft resolution and this report to draw a balance sheet on the three-year regroupment activity and to determine what is necessary, what is possible to do next.

The draft estimates that the Stalinist crisis provoked by the 20th Congress of the CPSU has about run its course in the United States. Where possible we should continue to maintain fraternal relations and common enterprises that we have established with people of different tendencies in the radical movement. But it is unrealistic to persist in our previous campaign for organizational regroupment along the lines followed during the last three years. It was correct to envisage organizational regroupment as a possibility at the start of the regroupment shake-up but it is not in the cards now. To those who want to conduct organized socialist activities today, we extend an invitation to join the Socialist Workers Party. That, in brief, is the essential line of the revised draft on the question of regroupment.

The regroupment campaign has been a three-year new experience for the party. A new experience in the sense that some comrades in the party, quite a few I believe, did not participate in previous regroupment tactics the party carried out. An experience which has been new for the cadre in general in the sense that this time our major attention in the regroupment effort has been directed to Communist Party circles.

We followed essentially the same methods in this campaign that were followed in the regroupment campaigns of the 1930's. Radical tendencies were in motion and were susceptible to our influence. We sought to approach them with tactical flexibility but with firmness on principles. In the current case, our objective has been to offer dissidents in the CP milieu a revolutionary alternative to Stalinism and to regroup socialist forces in a bigger and broader revolutionary organization.

Our intervention in the Stalinist crisis was different from the regroupment campaigns waged in the 30's in an important sense. At that time, we had the help of a rising mass radicalization which led to the stormy struggles that gave birth to the CIO. The working class was in action, dynamically in action. The impact throughout the radical movement was profound, both in elevating radical consciousness and in attracting new forces to the radical movement. Today the situation is different. The regroupment campaign of the past three years, resulting from the crisis of Stalinism which had its origin in events in the Soviet bloc, came at a time when the mass movement is dominated by a class collaborationist union bureaucracy. At a time when the radical tendencies generally are isolated from the mass movement. At a point when radicalism itself is at the lowest ebb ever in the United States, due in part to the prolonged boom and the witch hunt which has had an effect in conservatizing the working class. The adverse situation for radicalism today can also be charged up in large part to 30 years of Stalinist ideological domination over the radical movement. That meant miseducation of cadres, organization of betrayals, lost opportunities in the class struggle and class defeats.

With mass action at a low ebb the shakeup from the crisis of Stalinism has been confined generally to radical circles. This has seriously limited our capacity to link political propaganda with concrete class struggle issues. The regroupment process began around discussion of program. As you recall we published a pamphlet early in the campaign setting forth what we considered to be the key programmatic issues. Our presentation made no concessions in principle whatever. We said we were willing to discuss questions of program on a give and take basis, but we didn't say we would withdraw nor did we say we would modify any of our basic positions. Our pamphlet on regroupment advanced our revolutionary-socialist program, formulated with a special eye to the requirements of the given tactical situation.

By 1958 the process which began with discussion of program advanced to a point where it was possible to run some united tickets on a minimum socialist program. This action, as the resolution points out, was symbolic of the road that all forms of radicalization must take in this country. Motion towards radicalization must represent essentially a struggle for independent class political action, because that remains central to the unresolved historic problems of the country.

In approaching the regroupment milieu after the development of the Stalinist crisis we set the following general tasks for ourselves: To reach Communist Party militants who had been caught up

as long as 30 years in the entrapment of Stalinist ideology. To break down the taboos against Trotskyism that had been inculcated into the ranks of the Communist Party by the bureaucratic misleaders. To help them toward a revolutionary reorientation. To recruit as many former Communist Party militants as possible. To penetrate the former Stalinist periphery and break up the Communist Party monopoly in that periphery. Generally along these lines to contest the Communist Party as the dynamic center of the radical movement in this country.

Our method of approach to dissidents in this milieu can be outlined about like this. Our first task was to encourage a break from Stalinism, recognizing that before there could be any possibility of an individual moving in a revolutionary direction, he had to break with the Stalinist ideology. In that sense, we gave all dissidents the benefit of the doubt. We didn't write anybody off in advance through fake political, pseudo-psychological formulas that permitted somebody to look into the future and predict what John Jones or Mary Lee would do three months and two days from now.

No, our effort was to seek contact with everybody we could in this milieu and to move in every possible way to promote an atmosphere of free, give and take discussion. We followed that by pushing the idea of working together on minimum principled lines, putting the focus on questions of program but leaving latitude for various organizational forms of any revolutionary-socialist regroupment. We reserved definitive judgment about individuals with whom we were making contact until their further evolution had been determined.

Our experience disclosed three main tendencies in former Stalinist circles. We found some militants who really wanted a revolutionary party. They came to the Socialist Workers Party and some of them are here with us today and will participate fruitfully in this convention. We also found dissident Communist Party members whose motion was unclear at the start. Some showed social democratic leanings toward conciliation with bourgeois democracy. At the same time they continued to insist they were partisans of the Soviet Union. There was a profound contradiction in their views. But we recognized that it would be unwise to prejudge the direction in which they would resolve this contradiction and that, in any case, we should try to help them resolve it in a revolutionary direction.

The third category was the former periphery breaking away from Communist Party domination. People in this category provided the bulk of the non-SWP forces around whom the united election campaigns were conducted in 1958. As a matter of fact, the regroupment process reached its high point in the 1958 united socialist electoral campaigns. The New York campaign constituted the central action in the sense that it represented the broadest electoral combination in an area looked upon as the center of radicalism in the country. Parallel united electoral action was conducted by the comrades in Seattle, and our comrades in Chicago found a way to unite in action with non-party individuals who wanted to conduct an effective socialist election campaign. In every instance we had to override opposi-

tion of the Communist Party and fight off attacks from the social democrats.

In the united electoral campaigns we could put forward only part of our program. In New York, for example, to hold the coalition together in the face of a Communist Party attack, we had to give up the plank on socialist democracy and we had to give up our right to a place on the ticket. Neither of these were concessions in principle but they were serious -- a lot to give up. And it should be emphasized that such concessions do not constitute a precedent for any future electoral coalition.

The comrades in Seattle had difficulty with a coalition candidate who insisted on being identified as a liberal and who played a generally disruptive role in their electoral campaign. In view of their experience I am sure they will be the first to agree that, to be acceptable in an electoral coalition, all candidates must be ready to identify themselves with socialism.

The issues that were temporarily put aside in the united campaigns were dealt with in the press. They were raised elsewhere by Socialist Workers Party candidates. There was not an absence of treatment of issues left out of the minimum programs of the united tickets. The paper also differentiated where necessary from the statements of non-party coalition candidates that went beyond the minimum platform in the wrong direction. The record was kept clear in this manner. There were no concessions in principle.

The 1958 campaigns marked not only the high point but also the turning point in the regroupment process. A considerable portion of the former CP periphery has been back-tracking politically since the elections. They have found themselves unable to surmount the miseducation in capitalist politics received in the Stalinist school. Considerable disappointment was manifested over the socialist vote in the united campaigns. People coming from the Stalinist milieu lack the revolutionary education necessary to keep them on the long, hard, principled road that leads to the building of a party that can lead a revolution. Lacking this fundamental understanding, many have begun to re-think their positions in terms of peoples front politics looking toward 1960.

As Comrade Cannon observed, it has proven easier for individuals from the periphery of the Communist Party to break with the Communist Party organizationally than to overcome their Stalinist miseducation. That does not mean the process has been uniform. There have been sufficient exceptions to indicate that we can count on new allies in the 1960 presidential campaign, people who still supported the "anti-monopoly coalition" concept in 1956. That we take note of. But we must recognize at the same time that in the regroupment milieu the general trend since the end of 1958 has been a reversal of motion. A tendency to pull back toward the Stalinist People's Front line. A turn that has been manifested particularly in the treatment of foreign policy questions involving the Soviet Union and China. A definite trend back toward adaptations to Stalinist fellow-travelerism. Limited cooperation with people in this milieu remains possible. But it is not realistic to count on an electoral bloc with them in 1960.

Looking at another category of dissidents from the Communist Party milieu, we come to the Gates type who today show a marked tendency toward reconciliation with bourgeois democracy, assuming more and more a social-democratic political coloration. Although they are resolving their earlier contradiction in the wrong direction, it was nevertheless correct to give these individuals, including Gates, the benefit of the doubt at the start of the shake-up precipitated by the 20th Congress. Their opposition within the Communist Party, as a matter of fact, helped to set other forces in motion who proved capable of moving in a revolutionary direction. But the present evolution of the Gatesites underlines the effects of the Stalinist ideology and it emphasizes a devastating indictment to be set down against Stalinism.

Not one top leader of the Communist Party in the United States proved capable of turning in a revolutionary direction. Not one top leader. The only ones who proved capable of moving toward revolutionary positions were rank and file CP members or secondary leaders. They proved they were bigger in every respect, had a deeper ingrained revolutionary consciousness, than a single one of the bureaucratic hacks who had been slapping them around, talking down to them and dictating to them in the Communist Party for years. But not one top leader proved capable of making the turn.

As I remarked at the outset, the draft resolution draws from these circumstances I have briefly described the conclusion that for the present the crisis in the Communist Party has about run its course. This is set down in generalized form in paragraph 35 which reads:

"The crisis provoked by the 20th Congress exposures has about run its course in the United States. The remnants of the die-hard Stalinists have been reorganized on a considerably reduced basis. The great bulk of functionaries and members who have left the party in the past three years have failed to set up any semblance of organization, except for the ultra-Stalinist Vanguard group. They have either retired from active radical politics altogether or are playing Democratic party politics learned in the Stalinist school. Although a large number of pro-Soviet sympathizers are no longer under direct domination of the CPUSA, they are displaying a more and more uncritical attitude toward the bureaucratic regimes in the Soviet bloc. Moreover, many of them, in the absence of any extensive mass pressure for independent political action, exhibit a stronger disposition to support 'progressive' candidates on capitalist party tickets in order to beat some 'reactionary at all costs.'"

Looking at the three-year regroupment process from another point of view, we take note of the fact that the Stalinist crisis has put all socialist tendencies to the test with instructive results. It is a matter of significance to note that the Shachtmanite tendency -- people who departed from our ranks 19 years ago because they did not have the revolutionary stamina to defend the Soviet Union under conditions of World War II -- this tendency has liquidated itself into an amalgamation of social democratic elements on an essentially pro-imperialist basis. They found their home in the SP-SDF. And if somebody good at Latin here knows some kind of a phrase to put on their political gravestone that's about all that remains to be said.

JPC: "De mortuis nil nisi bonum."

And with a perfect accent!

The Cochranite tendency split from our party in 1953. They called us a rigid, sectarian, dogmatic tendency with absolutely no reason for being. The only way you could get ahead in that period, they said, was to be responsive to the Communist Party milieu. This they were preaching before anything happened in CP circles of any real consequence. What's the balance sheet on them, after the CP crisis really set in and the regroupment shakeup started? Well, it can be stated in just a few words. Both wings -- as you know, they had a split -- both wings were impotent. They gained nothing from the Stalinist shakeup. They contributed only political confusion to dissidents in the CP milieu who were seeking revolutionary clarification.

The Socialist Workers Party proved to be the most responsive and the most influential in the whole regroupment shakeup and the only real gainer. We proved in action in the last three years that the main judgment of our party is not our isolation from the masses. The main fact is not that we have lost ground across the hard years of reaction. The main fact is that we survived the isolation, the persecution and met a new opportunity with vigor and self-confidence. That's our guarantee for the future, that's the answer to the question: What does the Socialist Workers Party amount to?

The response of our party to the Stalinist crisis is the fruit of the revolutionary education of our cadre, of our stubborn determination not to deviate from class truth. It's the fruit of our clarity of program, our refusal to play around like political kibbitzers with all-important political questions. It's the fruit of our fundamental principles on which the revolutionary character as well as the revolutionary intelligence of each and every member of our cadre is built.

What we accomplished was also due in part to the experience of the party in previous regroupment tests, knowledge brought down to the present through continuity in the leadership. Past experience prepared us to approach dissident Stalinists with the necessary tactical flexibility, as well as with the necessary firmness of revolutionary principle. Today all of us stand a little taller politically on the basis of our three-year regroupment experience. That also goes down on the balance sheet.

Now I come to some other critics we had -- the tense is carefully chosen -- the Marcyites. They charged us with compromise of principles in the regroupment campaign. Their opposition to our intervention in the regroupment shakeup really stemmed from their adaptation to power politics. They showed pronounced Stalinist-conciliationist tendencies, particularly in applauding the massacre of the revolutionary workers in Hungary. From then on they became hostile strangers in our party. The membership soon recognized the meaning of their turn and they couldn't gain an inch working for their line inside the party. That's why they walked out last February at the beginning of the pre-convention discussion and their

direction has been sharply revealed since they split by their maneuver toward the ultra-Stalinist Vanguard group. That's the story about the Marcyites. I don't propose to say anything more about it.

Some comrades were critical of the regroupment policy from another point of view. They thought we were making a mistake in concentrating the attention we did on the general regroupment milieu. These comrades contended that mass work would be a more effective means of reaching dissidents breaking with the CP than a direct intervention in the Stalinist crisis of the kind we conducted. They contended that in general the only worthwhile elements among the dissidents would be found in the mass movement.

The result of such a policy would have been to negate a genuine opportunity for the party. This aspect of the question should be reflected on further by the comrades who held that view as they study paragraph 28 of the revised draft resolution which summarizes the tangible gains of the three-year regroupment campaign. Paragraph 28 reads as follows:

"The revolutionary socialist movement has registered a number of tangible gains as a result of the SWP's intervention in the ferment of American radicalism precipitated by the 20th Congress.

(1) "Free discussion among socialists of varying views, which had for 30 years been prevented by Stalinism, was revived and carried on vigorously for many months, extending into Stalinist circles from which the ideas of genuine Marxism had been completely debarred.

(2) "The CP proscription of 'Trotskyism' was broken and the SWP's right to participate in activities and discussions within American radical circles was recognized and established in practice.

(3) "The precedent-breaking common campaigns in the electoral field and other spheres contributed to the revival of independent socialist political action and solidarity in struggle against capitalist reaction.

(4) "A significant number of former members and sympathizers of the CP were recruited and integrated into the ranks of the SWP.

(5) "The SWP acquired more power as an initiating center within the radical movement and more attractiveness as the decisive organized force pressing for socialist objectives.

(6) "The impact of the shakeup in American radicalism plus the alert and continuing intervention of the SWP on the scene brought into being a nationally organized revolutionary-socialist youth cadre for the first time in a generation.

(7) "As a consequence of all these developments over the past three years, the ability of the revolutionary-socialist forces to head off American Stalinism in contending for leadership in the next upsurge of American labor militancy has been measurably improved.



"While American radicalism has been experiencing an uninterrupted decline owing to adverse objective conditions, the revolutionary socialist tendency represented by the SWP is the only one that has gained ground and strengthened its relative position over the past three years. This is attributable to the correctness and effectiveness of its regroupment policy. By a negative outlook and attitude, merely repeating previous formulas and criticizing from the sidelines, the cause of revolutionary socialism would have gained nothing but would most certainly have lost ground."

We certainly have valid reasons, as paragraph 28 summarizes, to affirm the correctness of the three-year regroupment policy, but it would now be a mistake to cling to that policy as if nothing had changed. With forces in motion in our direction, as has been the case, a flexible approach implied no contradiction with programmatic firmness. But we must recognize that the trend is now reversing, that the motion is away from revolutionary positions. It would be false to retain in those circumstances a mechanical notion of a flexible approach, because it would imply a trend toward softness on programmatic issues and it would entail a danger of compromising our revolutionary principles. From that point of view a general summation of the shift in our tactical orientation is made in the last three paragraphs of the resolution which I want to read to you.

We begin with paragraph 36: "The regroupment policy will probably retain its validity as a method of approach to new break-away currents reacting to another big shakeup in the Soviet orbit or, more importantly, as an approach to new transitional formations which may arise out of the mass movement in the early stages of coming disturbances within U.S. capitalism. Meanwhile, all the fraternal relations and common enterprises which have been established with so many people of different tendencies in the past three years should be maintained and extended, wherever possible. But it would be unrealistic to persist in our campaign for organizational regroupment along previous lines. The significant changes in external circumstances noted above curtail the prospects for organizational fusion with forces now visible on the scene.

"37. Everything that has happened since the outbreak of the crisis of Stalinism has served to confirm the position of Trotskyism as the only genuine revolutionary tendency in our own country and on a world scale. There has been and there is no reason whatever to abandon or modify the basic programmatic positions worked out by our movement and consistently defended in struggle since 1928. Over the past three years the SWP has again shown in practice our willingness to cooperate with socialist-minded individuals and groups of differing political views in specific issues involving civil rights, the labor movement, the Negro struggle and the cause of socialism. The party has exchanged ideas on programmatic questions without raising ultimatic conditions which would have shut off discussion before it could start. Our party intends to continue along this line. But this method of approach, which we first applied in the revolutionary socialist regroupment activities of the 1930's, does not imply and has never implied any intention on our part to build a politically heterogenous organization at the expense of revolutionary principles without which

no effective and enduring revolutionary vanguard party can be created. As explicitly stated in our original declaration on socialist regroupment in the U.S., the SWP has been guided by the undeviating aim of promoting the ideas, programs and methods of revolutionary socialism in opposition to the programs and practices of Social-Democratic reformism and Stalinism or any other political formation sharing their ideas to one degree or another.

"38. As evidenced by our fusions with revolutionary socialist currents of different origins in the past and by our efforts over the past three years, we are not organizational fetishists. We ask only that whatever party organization may emerge from such an unavoidable process of collaboration and eventual merger of socialist elements should meet the test of revolutionary principles which alone can give a new and broader party historic significance. We are convinced, as our 1946 Theses on the American Revolution stated, that the class struggle in the United States must necessarily culminate in a social revolution, and the indispensable instrument to lead and organize this necessary social revolution is a proletarian socialist party of the kind we have consistently advocated from the beginning of our movement. To those searching for the best means of conducting organized socialist activity today, we extend an invitation to join the SWP. In our party they will find both an instrument for militant action and the means to work along principled lines for the broadest possible regroupment of American revolutionists."

Those are the lines along which we will continue to work. But to understand the situation more fully we must also take a frank look at the present state of American radicalism. This is today much clearer to us than it was three years ago. We're more keenly aware that all radical groups in this country have long been subsisting on aging cadres. We understand more clearly today than we did three years ago the extent to which the cadres of young radicals crystallized in the class actions of the 30's have been cut to pieces by the pressures of reaction and by the political mayhem committed through Stalinist ideology.

The regroupment experience has confirmed our contention against the Cochranites in 1953 that we can't expect big gains from ex-Stalinist circles. Some people we have won, some we can still hope to win, but it will be relatively few in terms of building a strong revolutionary party. We have been confirmed in our estimate that the new radical forces must come mainly from the mass movement, and more accurately, from among the young workers and student youth. That makes our forging of a youth cadre during the last three years a key achievement of the regroupment campaign.

The battle to win the adherence of potential new rebel forces continues. All that changes is the specific form of confrontation of tendencies. The three-year campaign has strengthened us in the relation of forces between tendencies in the radical movement, as the resolution describes. We stand against all other tendencies on the basis of Marxist fundamentals. Our aim is to build an independent revolutionary party of the vanguard. We reject all ideas of an all-inclusive substitute for a revolutionary party because "all-inclusive" means reformist and reformist parties can't lead a revolution.

That doesn't mean we wouldn't under any circumstances participate in broader political formations. We will do so wherever we see a chance to win new revolutionary forces. That was the meaning of the regroupment approach that brought about the fusion with the AWP in the 30's. That was the meaning of the entry policy into the SP in the 30's. That's the meaning of the work of the British Trotskyists in the Labor Party today and we only wish we had a similar opportunity in this country. But along with our tactical flexibility we have always refused and we always will refuse to water down our program in order to make it more acceptable to others.

Where we see left tendencies in motion in a broader political formation we approach them with tactical flexibility and with programmatic firmness, trying to win bigger forces to our revolutionary program. We reject all adaptations to reformism. As against that we counterpose a class struggle line. We oppose subordination of the class struggle to power politics on the world arena. We stand for revolutionary internationalism. It's good I think, at this point, to remind ourselves once again of a succinct definition Trotsky gave of the task of revolutionists in our time. If I can recall his words from memory alone, he said, "The task of revolutionists today is, on the one side, to know how to fight Stalinism without capitulating to imperialism and, on the other side, to know how to fight imperialism without capitulating to Stalinism." It's a simple but very profound thought worth marking in your memories.

We draw our basic political understanding and our fundamental strength as a revolutionary cadre from the long view of history. We understand, as our key international resolution of 1955 pointed out, that the world productive forces have outgrown private property relations and national boundaries. As a consequence the dominant world feature today is the struggle between outlived capitalism and the oncoming socialist order. We live in an era of permanent revolution which unfolds essentially as a single process in a historic drive toward world socialism. But we know also that the concrete development of this revolutionary process is uneven and contradictory. There are different national stages involved, as broadly defined by the tasks of the colonial revolution in retarded nations, the political revolution in the workers states and the social revolution in advanced capitalist countries. These uneven and contradictory processes are affected, in turn, by the opposing world impulses toward revolution and toward counter-revolution.

Our task in this complex process is to perceive changing reality. To recognize and support every revolutionary advance. To find the revolutionary answer to the unresolved historic problems. Above all to grapple with the unsolved problem of the crisis of proletarian leadership, which is the problem of forging a strong revolutionary party linked to the mass movement.

Trotsky has been richly confirmed in his prediction that a major revolutionary impulse would arise from the shattering of the status quo in World War II. And, by the way, we should not forget the contribution of the American working class to that process. Comrade Art Preis is now writing a book about the labor movement that is going to be an extremely valuable tool for us, especially for young

revolutionary fighters who are yet to come to our party. One of the chapters deals with the mass upsurge of the American working class at the end of World War II. He analyzes the unprecedented strike wave of 1945-46 which illustrated the power inherent in the American working class. He explains the significance of the troop demonstrations of the same period in which American imperialism was confronted the day after the victory with a mutiny of historic proportions. We didn't get workers power in the United States as a result of these mass actions but the American working class clamped a vise-like grip on the arm of imperialism at that critical moment when military power was needed to nip in the bud the revolutionary upsurge developing in the colonial countries.

Don't ever let anybody knock the American working class. If you hear anybody blaming the working class for the condition of the American labor movement, you can mark him down as either a scoundrel or an ignoramus who ought to keep his mouth shut. He doesn't know class power when he sees it. He mistakes impotent leadership for class impotence.

The colonial revolution, which the American workers helped along, served to trigger the Chinese revolution and set strong forces in motion toward political revolution in the Soviet bloc countries. Class tensions have mounted in the advanced capitalist countries. The whole period since World War II has been characterized by a general trend toward mass radicalization.

However, this trend has been distorted and retarded by the labor bureaucracies of all stripes, from the bureaucracy in the Kremlin to the American union bureaucracy. These bureaucracies have many common characteristics, not the least of which is their desire to immobilize the masses and substitute bureaucratic maneuvers for mass action. Common to all these bureaucracies is the practice of class collaboration, although there are variations in the theme, according to the specific bureaucratic interest involved in each particular case.

Revisionists of all types become overawed by these seemingly indestructible labor bureaucracies. They understand neither the basis for these bureaucracies nor their transitory nature. We, on the other hand, are fully aware that bureaucratism is not a historic necessity in fundamental social terms and has no historic guarantee of continuing life. It is a product of the inter-action between revolution and counter-revolution. Revolutionary impulses, the sum of mass actions in the history of the world class struggle were necessary to create the foundations on which bureaucratism rests. Without October there could have been no Stalin. The creation of a union movement through mass struggle provided the base for the present labor bureaucracy which has fastened itself on the American workers.

The full gains won through mass action can be held only through continued expansion of the revolutionary process. A slowdown of the revolution becomes the starting point for counter-revolution, for the rise of reaction. When the pendulum swings toward counter-revolution on the world arena, particularly in a prolonged period of reaction, labor bureaucracies are able to fasten their grip over the masses. They dominate and subvert to their bureaucratic inter-

ests the organized labor power created through mass struggles. They expropriate political democracy from the working class, a practice as common to the labor fakers in this country as it is to the Stalinist bureaucrats in the Kremlin. They subvert class struggle policies, impose class collaboration upon the masses and become a brake upon revolutionary resurgence.

That's why the Trotskyist tendency came into being on the world revolutionary arena. Because the greatest betrayal of all that has wreaked the greatest devastation on the working class of the world was the Stalinist betrayal of the October revolution. We -- and our co-thinkers -- have fought to uphold class truth under circumstances where Stalinism got false credit in the eyes of militants for the October revolution, enabling them to miseducate and mislead a generation of militants and use state power to physically exterminate Trotskyist cadres. In a prolonged period of reaction we have kept class faith, we have maintained the Marxist thread. And we have demonstrated in the last three years that we are still capable of moving right in every time there is an opportunity to gain an inch in building the revolutionary party. We're always looking for a chance to do the necessary and the possible. That's been the role of our Trotskyist cadre throughout the years.

The revisionists, against whom we stand, are much preoccupied with slick solutions of the world crisis short of mass action. They pin their hopes on a deal between the great powers at a summit conference. Some think that science, plus nationalized property, plus bureaucratic reform can resolve the historic social crisis along Stalinist lines. Others think -- or at least pretend to think -- that capitalism can be reformed and that the American labor bureaucracy can be made an instrument for social advance. But, unfortunately for them, reformism in all its conceptions and practices fails to provide the historically necessary avenue to full workers power, to the full assertion of the power of the working class. Neither imperialism nor the labor bureaucracies will change in basic character. The masses, frustrated in their aspirations to improve their lives, will insist repeatedly on intervening in world politics. And the line of the reformists will be refuted time and time again under the impact of events involving intervention of the masses. Let me cite two examples.

Between 1953 and 1956 there was a great burgeoning of the theory that the Stalinist bureaucracy within the Soviet bloc could be reformed, that the revolution could right itself without mass intervention. Then the workers in Hungary stepped in and said, "Well, we're not going to wait too long, we want results. The way things are it looks like we must take matters into our own hands." They acted. The bureaucracy savagely repressed their struggle and gave a rich demonstration of the character of bureaucracy and a refutation of any notion of reforming it.

Take another example, the DeGaulle coup. This French political event was the oblique result of mass intervention in the colonial and semi-colonial countries, the mounting colonial revolution, ranging all the way from Indo-China to Algeria, that has been striking hammer blows at French imperialism. DeGaulle took power in a

national crisis where the labor bureaucracies proved impotent. He set up a Bonapartist regime and shot holes in the theory that bourgeois democracy can solve the historic problem of the French working class. DeGaulle's action in France is only a more vicious and clear form of the counter-revolutionary tendencies implicit in the Tory attack on the working class in Britain and in the McClellan offensive against the American unions. It marks a general crumbling of bourgeois-democratic institutions across the whole capitalist sector of the world under the developing impact of capitalist crisis and under the hammer blows of mass action wherever the working class has a chance to act in defense of its interests.

It is mass action alone that has slowed down the imperialist war drive, both in current struggles and through the fruits of earlier revolutionary gains. When you measure the role of the Soviet Union as a power today, in military and other terms, don't forget that at the foundation of that power lay mass actions, particularly in October 1917. In terms similar to those of the labor theory of value, congealed mass action lies at the foundation of the great and growing organized strength in every revolutionary sector of the world today.

The changing relation of world forces is superficially reflected in the power complex. But the existing power stalemate has a built-in contradiction. On the one side the imperialists are driven toward war to preserve capitalist rule, and on the other side stands the fact that only further revolutionary advances can prevent war. Therefore the ultimate solution of the historic crisis of mankind hinges on a change in the relation of forces between the workers and the labor bureaucrats. And here we find a factor of great significance.

The capitalist crisis is undermining the base of all labor bureaucracies. Fundamental to the incurable crisis that has struck Stalinism -- and mark you well that the present re-stabilization of bureaucratic regimes in the Soviet bloc is merely a temporary phenomenon -- the root cause of the Stalinist crisis is the deepening capitalist crisis. And the capitalist crisis is undermining the base of every labor bureaucracy, including the union bureaucracy in the United States. At the same time the sharpening class antagonisms impel the workers toward class struggle in the capitalist countries, including the United States, where -- although long immobilized -- the class power of the workers has not been broken.

We recognize that mass action must start in distorted forms within the framework of the existing bureaucratic structures. It follows that the actions can only be partial, but even these partial actions will tend to pose basic social problems. With the social problems remaining unsolved, capitalist counter-attacks on the working class will lead to class war. The workers will be driven toward assertion of their full class power and it is there that our party will play its key role. Only our revolutionary-socialist tendency meets the needs of the working class. Only our tendency has the program needed to forge a vanguard party capable of resolving the crisis of proletarian leadership, of fusing with the masses through a transitional program adjusted to their present level of

consciousness and leading them toward revolutionary-socialist consciousness. Only our program can link the working class power to historic necessity.

We are not dismayed, we are not disillusioned, we are not disoriented by the fact that at present we find ourselves at an unfavorable conjuncture. We see promising signs of change. We see mass fears of the war danger which imply coming responses to criticism of the foreign policy of imperialism. We see in the ebbs and flows of the boom-recession cycle an inter-penetrating process that is generating militancy, tending to upset class-collaborationist norms and thrusting the workers toward class struggle policies. We see in the capitalist offensive against labor a process that will stimulate further militancy in the working class, increase rank and file pressures for union democracy, and heighten the workers determination to take union affairs into their own hands. These trends will help to forge a class struggle left wing in the mass movement. At present, however, action perspectives remain limited for us. Our union work continues to center mainly on propaganda around transitional demands.

We have scheduled a panel on union work at which the comrades should get together to discuss union policy and to assemble information on the present state of things in the labor movement so that the incoming National Committee can have a better picture of the changing reality. We ask similar efforts from the comrades attending the panel on our activity in the struggle for Negro equality. We need to keep closely abreast of developments, even though possibilities of our intervention in the mass movement remain very limited. We will do what we can, move where we can, seize every realistic opportunity to intervene in support of mass actions. But we must be careful not to stumble into any adventures.

As the resolution points out, the 1960 presidential elections loom as our next major political action. It's important to emphasize that we enter the 1960 campaign not simply because a presidential election is coming up on the calendar. We approach the campaign as a political opportunity to be seized upon and turned to our advantage. Between now and 1960 we should look upon all forms of party activity as helping to prepare for the presidential campaign. And in turn view the 1960 presidential campaign as a general political action designed to help all forms of party activity.

A keystone to our work in the next period must be the expanded circulation of the revolutionary-socialist press. This must not be viewed as a matter of organizational routine but as a political task of the first order. It should be at the top of the branch agendas as a continuing effort, and I can see the literature agents beginning to smile in approval of that collective effort. We're arranging a panel on this question for discussion of various practical ways and means of expanding press circulation.

A circulation increase also requires attention to the political character of the press. The general line of approach should include: Application of transitional demands to current class struggle

issues. Polemics against the class collaborationist union bureaucrats and against the conservative misleaders of the Negro movement. An ideological offensive against opponent radical tendencies. The combining of immediate questions in the class struggle with a preparatory buildingup toward projection of the 1960 campaign issues.

If enough forces were available on acceptable lines we would favor a broad socialist ticket in 1960, but a complex of factors beyond our control make a united ticket highly uncertain. The party cannot afford to proceed with expectation that a united ticket is in the cards. There is a strong likelihood we'll be running our own candidates and we must make all the necessary preparations accordingly. The first step begins in August in Michigan where the comrades are going to launch their campaign to put the party on the ballot for 1960. In the next period we propose to go ahead step by step elsewhere along the necessary lines to put a socialist ticket in the field.

We go into the 1960 campaign recognizing that once again a vast political swindle is being perpetrated against the working class. The union bureaucrats, the Negro leaders, the social democrats, the Stalinists and their fellow-travelers -- in each case acting through their own motives and with their own particular brand of arguments -- all are uniting in fact, if not in form, to keep the workers trapped in Democratic Party politics.

The Socialist Workers Party has the capacity, we have the ability to take the initiative in throwing the spotlight of class truth on this political swindle. We are ready to take that initiative. We will welcome all the help we can get. We'll make every effort we can to rally a maximum of campaign support. But come hell or high water we can, we must and we will act to guarantee that there will be an independent socialist ticket in the field in the 1960 presidential elections.

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YOUTH REPORT TO EIGHTEENTH NATIONAL CONVENTION

By Tim Wohlforth

(The following is a summary of the report given by Tim Wohlforth to the 1959 SWP convention. The general line of the report was approved unanimously by the convention.)

The placing of this point on the agenda of the convention signifies that the party recognizes the importance of the creation of a revolutionary youth movement to our work today.

In assisting the establishment of a youth movement the party is basing itself on the experience of the Marxist youth movement from the time of Karl Liebknecht on. It was the early socialist youth movement which carried on the struggle in the pre-World War I period against militarism and the preparations for war. In so doing the youth came into direct conflict with the general reformist drift of the social democratic parties which culminated in the betrayal of the anti-war struggle in 1914.

Virtually the whole socialist youth movement went over to the new Communist International in 1918 and helped not only to create the Young Communist International but also participated in the building of the Communist parties in their respective countries. The formation of the Fourth International again attracted youth and young people, again raised the banner of Liebknecht. Our youth today are the legitimate inheritors of this tradition.

The present forces which make up the Young Socialist movement grew out of independent movements within the radical youth forces in this country which the party responded to and helped along. First came the struggle within the Young Socialist League. The conception of an independent revolutionary youth movement was worked out by the YSL Left Wing as an alternative to the Right Wing's capitulation to the social democracy engineered by Shachtman. On the basis of agreement on this conception the Left Wing began collaboration with the SWP which led to the fusion of the Left Wing with the SWP youth.

The fusion with the Left Wing was crucial to the development of a revolutionary youth movement not so much because of the numbers (which were small) this added to the revolutionary youth cadre but because the fusion gave the youth formation a broader independent stamp and thus made it a pole of attraction to other youth. The Left Wing fight also gave the youth a political tradition -- a political past. The documents written in the YSL struggle form the "In Defense of Marxism" of the youth movement.

These fused forces then turned their attention to the turmoil existing among the Stalinist youth, turmoil created by the Khrushchev revelations and the Polish and Hungarian events. By energetically pursuing a regroupment line towards these elements we were able to further the crisis and thus postpone the consolidation of the Stalinist youth. To this day the crisis continues and the possibility of the Stalinists to launch a national youth formation is put off for some time to come. We recruited some of the best people in

this milieu to our youth movement and to the party. Finally, we created a milieu within which our youth forces could work -- people for us to talk to and to explain our ideas to.

The ability to develop a revolutionary youth cadre through fusion with the YSL Left Wing and then recruitment from the Stalinist milieu was made possible because of the energetic policy of the party. Without the SWP forces this youth movement could not have been created. The political line of the party also was attractive to young people looking for a road out of their crisis. Finally, the organizational approach of the party was crucial. The party based its policy on a recognition of the organizational independence of the youth. It did not attempt to dictate to the youth. Without such a flexible policy we would not have been able to fuse with the Left Wing or reach out to the young people formerly around the Stalinists.

As a result of its support to the youth movement the party has benefited. At our Detroit Conference of the YS supporters the majority present were either non-party members or party members (and this was the largest figure) who had joined the party since the beginning of youth work.

Even more important the youth experience has developed young party and non-party members so that we now have a functioning organization with its own press, its own internal life and its own skilled youth cadres which acts as a companion movement to the party reaching out to young people and winning them over to revolutionary socialism.

The key to the progress we have made in the youth field has been our conception of the relation between the youth movement and the party. Basically we can put it as follows: The content of party-youth relations in any period is political solidarity between the youth and the party but organizational independence for the youth. The form this relationship takes varies from period to period. It may be expressed in open affiliation between party and youth, or in fraternal relations or, as is presently the case, in informal cooperation.

The youth movement is neither an opponent organization within which the party members operate as a fraction nor a simple appendage of the party. The youth should rather be looked upon as a section of the revolutionary movement united with the party by bonds of political solidarity. However, the youth movement must have its own organizational life with its own leadership, internal discussions, etc. Its program must be worked out jointly by party and non-party members of the youth organization. No young person in his right mind (and these are the only young people we want) would join a youth group if its policies were determined by a caucus of that group composed of members of an adult party. The quickest way to kill the youth movement is to impose that type of discipline within it.

It is precisely because of the independent nature of the youth movement that I am not presenting to this body a full report on the many tactical problems facing the YS that the YS National Plenum

will be shortly discussing. I am emphasizing here those questions which relate to party-youth relations and party policy towards the youth.

Our experience of the last two years has shown that wherever there is smooth working relations between the party and the youth, locally and nationally, both organizations benefit and grow.

As a result of our aggressive participation in the regroupment process and our correct understanding of party-youth relations we have been able to assist in the development of a functioning national youth movement. The youth now have a basic political and organizational cohesiveness worked out at our Detroit Conference. We have functioning groups in nine local areas with influence in an additional eleven areas. Our publication, the Young Socialist has the largest circulation among young people of any radical publication in the U.S. We all feel we have a period of modest but highly important growth ahead of us. Many of our worst difficulties are now in the past and we are all united in our desire to start really building a fighting youth organization in this country.

In order to ensure this development we are proposing that the party continue its policy of:

1. Favoring the development of an independent revolutionary socialist youth movement in this country.

2. Encouraging its growth with the forces -- personnel, financial and otherwise -- available to it.

3. On the basis of the political solidarity between the YS movement and the party recognizing the necessity of organizational independence of the youth.

In return we can assure you that the youth will provide a constant flow of new forces into the party. It will act as a training ground for young party members and thus raise the quality as well as the quantity of new members. The youth will carry on a political campaign in opposition to bourgeois influences among youth whether in direct form or indirectly through the social democrats (who are strong among youth) or the Stalinists. Finally we will build a youth cadre that will be capable of building a mass revolutionary socialist youth movement under favorable objective circumstances and thus ensuring the young working class forces necessary to build a party capable of bringing socialism in the U.S.

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