

SWP

discussion bulletin

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SOCIALIST LABOUR LEAGUE

186 Clapham High Street,
London, S.W. 4.

2nd January, 1961

TO: The National Committee of the
Socialist Workers' Party.

Dear Comrades,

As we write, events in Belgium, following hard upon the developments in Japan and in Britain, are giving the lie to the Pabloites' defeatist assertion that the 'epicentre' of the world revolution has shifted from the advanced capitalist countries. The main importance of the colonial revolution is revealing itself to consist as we have always claimed, in its impact on the metropolitan centres of imperialism, in the stimulus it would give to the revived struggle of the workers in these countries.

The resolution for the forthcoming Pabloite congress in which the struggle in the advanced countries is written off in favour of the colonial revolution was drafted by Germain, leader of the Pabloite movement in Belgium. The Pabloites were evidently taken by surprise by the general strike in Belgium, although the strike in the Borinage should have forewarned them. The remoteness of the Pabloites from the actual course of history is ludicrously (but tragically) revealed by the present position in Belgium.

We are entering a period comparable in significance to 1914-1917 and it is as vital now as it was then to break sharply and clearly with all sorts of centrist tendencies within our own ranks. If we are to fulfil our revolutionary duty in the coming years as the Bolsheviks did, we have to follow the example of Lenin, not that of Luxemburg, in not merely criticising but also uncompromisingly separating ourselves from all sorts of contemporary Kautskys; first and foremost, from the Pablo gang.

It is now over 7 years since you addressed a letter to Trotskyists throughout the world concerning Pabloite revisionism and its disastrous effects upon the Fourth International. In that letter you outlined 'the fundamental principles on which the Trotskyist movement is built' as follows:

- '1) The death agony of the capitalist system threatens the destruction of civilization through worsening depressions, world wars and barbaric manifestations like fascism. The development of atomic weapons today underlines the danger in the gravest possible way.
- '2) The descent into the abyss can be avoided only by replacing capitalism with the planned economy of socialism on a world scale and thus resuming the spiral of progress opened up by capitalism in its early days.
- '3) This can be accomplished only under the leadership of the working class in society. But the working class itself faces a crisis in leadership although the world relationship of social forces was never so favourable as today for the workers to take the road to power.
- '4) To organize itself for carrying out this world-historic aim, the working class in each country must construct a revolutionary socialist party in the pattern developed by Lenin; that is, a combat party capable

of dialectically combining democracy and centralism - democracy in arriving at decisions, centralism in carrying them out; a leadership controlled by the ranks, ranks able to carry forward under fire in disciplined fashion.

'5) The main obstacle to this is Stalinism, which attracts workers through exploiting the prestige of the October 1917 Revolution in Russia, only later, as it betrays their confidence, to hurl them either into the arms of the Social Democracy, into apathy, or back into illusions in capitalism. The penalty for these betrayals is paid by the working people in the form of consolidation of fascist or monarchist forces, and new outbreaks of war fostered and prepared by capitalism. From its inception, the Fourth International set as one of its major tasks the revolutionary overthrow of Stalinism inside and outside the USSR.

'6) The need for flexible tactics facing many sections of the Fourth International, and parties or groups sympathetic to its programme, makes it all the more imperative that they know how to fight imperialism and all its petty-bourgeois agencies (such as nationalist formations or trade-union bureaucracies) without capitulation to Stalinism; and, conversely, know how to fight Stalinism (which in the final analysis is a petty-bourgeois agency of imperialism) without capitulation to imperialism.

'These fundamental principles established by Leon Trotsky retain full validity in the increasingly complex and fluid politics of the world today. In fact the revolutionary situations opening up on every hand as Trotsky foresaw, have only now brought full concreteness to what at one time may have appeared to be somewhat remote abstractions not intimately bound up with the living reality of the time. The truth is that these principles now hold with increasing force both in political analysis and in the determination of the course of practical action.'

You went on to state: 'These principles have been abandoned by Pablo. In place of emphasizing the danger of a new barbarism, he sees the drive towards socialism as "irreversible"; yet he does not see socialism coming within our generation or some generations to come. Instead he has advanced the concept of an "engulfing" wave of revolutions that give birth to nothing but "deformed", that is, Stalin-type workers' states which are to last for "centuries".'

'This reveals the utmost pessimism about the capacities of the working class, which is wholly in keeping with the ridicule he has lately voiced of the struggle to build independent revolutionary socialist parties. In place of holding to the main course of building independent revolutionary socialist parties by all tactical means, he looks to the Stalinist bureaucracy, or a decisive section of it, to so change itself under mass pressure as to accept the "ideas" and "programme" of Trotskyism. Under guise of the diplomacy required in tactical manoeuvres needed to approach workers in the camp of Stalinism in such countries as France, he now covers up the betrayals of Stalinism.'

Our section fully supported these principles and the political evaluation of Pablo which flowed from them. The greatest danger confronting the revolutionary movement is liquidationism, flowing from a capitulation either to the strength of imperialism or of the bureaucratic apparatuses in the Labour movement, or both. Pabloism represents, even more clearly now than in 1953, this liquidationist

tendency in the international Marxist movement. In Pabloism the advanced working class is no longer the vanguard of history, the centre of all Marxist theory and strategy in the epoch of imperialism, but the plaything of 'world-historical factors', surveyed and assessed in abstract fashion. The resolutions of the Pabloites for their forthcoming international conference are very explicit on this point. The present stage of the world revolution, according to them, is particularly characterised by the growing strength of the workers' states and the great power generated by the colonial revolution; the struggle in the advanced countries, because of changes in the character of modern capitalism, is relegated to a definitely subordinate position. Here all historical responsibility of the revolutionary movement is denied, all is subordinated to paneramic forces; the questions of the role of the Soviet bureaucracy and of the class forces in the colonial revolution are left unresolved. That is natural, because the key to these problems is the role of the working class in the advanced countries and the crisis of leadership in their labour movements.

A correct revolutionary orientation towards these questions is now a vital and urgent necessity, because in Japan and Britain there have begun great struggles which raise directly before the organized working class the issue of class leadership. In each case these issues are forced by the special manifestations of imperialism's latest crisis in these particular countries; the struggles around them will inevitably intensify and will spread to the other imperialist countries, including the USA. Any retreat from the strategy of political independence of the working class and the construction of revolutionary parties will take on the significance of a world-historical blunder on the part of the Trotskyist movement. In Britain we have seen the results of Pabloite revisionism in Pabloite actions since the formation of the Socialist Labour League and the current policy crisis in the Labour Party and we are more than ever convinced of the need to build a Leninist party absolutely freed from the revisionism which Pabloism represents.

It is because of the magnitude of the opportunities opening up before Trotskyism, and therefore the necessity for political and theoretical clarity, that we urgently require a drawing of the lines against revisionism in all its forms. It is time to draw to a close the period in which Pabloite revisionism was regarded as a trend within Trotskyism. Unless this is done we cannot prepare for the revolutionary struggles now beginning. We want the SWP to go forward with us in this spirit.

In November 1953 the British Pabloites, organized by Pablo, split from our movement and did everything possible to disrupt it. This led to a prolonged faction struggle which lasted almost six months for the control of our paper the Socialist Outlook. The sharpness of this struggle and the irresponsibility of the Pabloites greatly assisted the witch-hunt which followed in July 1954 when that paper was banned by the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party. At that time we were dealt a hard and bitter blow by the Pabloite revisionists. A few months later, as you know, the leaders of Pablo's movement in Britain wound up their organization, and eventually they joined the British Stalinist Party. Pablo has never at any time made a political examination of this development. He contented himself by simply noting in his journal Fourth International that his ex-followers were joining the 'most sectarian party' in the world.

In 1956 the publication of the Khrushchev speech opened up possibilities for the enlargement and development of our movement on a scale that we had not experienced since the period of the second world war. As you know we recruited some important cadres from the Communist Party and YCL. It was, of course, understandable that some of those who joined us at that time should find difficulty in

assimilating themselves in our ranks. These difficulties began to show themselves when Peter Fryer left our movement in August 1959. Some weeks later we had another defection on the part of Peter Cadogan, who thought he could attack the Socialist Labour League publicly through the channels of the Fleet Street press and still remain a member. Finally, there was Brian Behan who proposed the ultra-left theory that the Labour Party was a capitalist party and that we should have nothing to do with it.

During the course of these difficulties Pablo made numerous visits to England, where he endeavoured to encourage the greatest amount of factional disruption inside the Socialist Labour League. His publications presented the viewpoint of Cadogan and Fryer. He invited them to his Sixth Congress. He circulated a vicious and libellous document written by Fryer. He vehemently denounced the formation of the Socialist Labour League, and when we were under attack from the witch-hunters his followers either remained silent or, in some cases, joined the witch-hunters against us. You will recall how the Pabloites wrote up gloatingly the Marcyite walk-out from the SWP. These people everywhere play the role of hyenas and jackals in the movement.

During the last few months the political position of the renegades whose break with us was welcomed and encouraged by Pablo has become extremely clear. Peter Fryer has written an anti-Communist book called 'Twice Bitten' and was busy recently trying to find a publisher. Peter Cadogan advocates the theory that there is state capitalism in the Soviet Union and opposes on all possible occasions the building of the democratic-centralist revolutionary party in Britain. His latest demand is for freedom of speech for Mosley. Brian Behan is still only in the early stages of his development, but he has already travelled far and fast. He has repudiated Trotsky and Trotskyism - 'because of Kronstadt!' - and is now working in collusion with the anarchists under the slogan: 'Keep politics out of the trade unions.'

Of course, Pablo was not concerned with the political evolution of such people when he urged them to attack the Socialist Labour League. He was merely concerned with weakening the only organization in Britain which consistently fights for a Marxist policy and upholds the principles elaborated by Trotsky and the Fourth International which he founded. Pabloism plays a directly counter-revolutionary role in British working-class politics.

We consider that the position of Pablo in relation to Britain arises from the same revisionist course which lay behind the split in the Fourth International in 1953. We disagree entirely with those comrades who claim, as Comrade Hansen did in his letter to Kolpe of June 2, 1960, that 'the political positions have tended to converge still further.' On the contrary, we consider that experience has thoroughly confirmed your view that the 'lines of cleavage...are so deep that no compromise is possible either politically or organizationally'; and we have had more than ample experience of the Pabloites' policy of seeking to 'muzzle or handcuff' orthodox Trotskyists (your letter of November 1953).

In preparation for his Fifth Congress in 1958 Pablo again affirmed the central thesis of the Third World Congress which preceded the split of 1953. He said:

'the liquidation of Stalinism is on the agenda...The antagonism between capitalism and socialism cannot but lead to a war-revolution, i.e., an armed class struggle on the world scale. An economic or political crisis of large dimensions may be the immediate cause of the conflict. (We consider that war

has been technically possible for imperialism since 1954.)

'In the course of the process leading to the war-revolution, and during the latter, the proletariat in the countries where its recognized leadership is Stalinist will tend to regroup itself around the C.P. This leadership may put forward a revolutionary policy under the pressure of the masses. Parallel with this, trends of opposition to Stalinism will appear in the Communist Parties, doubtless on a more or less "centrist" basis to start with.'

Nothing had changed then, so far as Pablo's thinking was concerned. At that time, during the discussion around the parity committee, we had occasion to write that in our opinion the political differences were even greater than at the time of the split in 1953. Significantly, in contrast to our experience in Britain, where we advocated an orthodox Trotskyist policy, Pablo made no gains of any importance from the Communist Party here as a result of the 1956 crisis. It was our very firmness on the question of Stalinism and its prospects that helped to clarify those ex-Stalinists whom we won in 1956-57 and who have become loyal and valuable members of our organization. They also appreciated that we, unlike the Pabloites, were working consistently towards the establishment of a revolutionary Marxist party, the need for which they understood.

An editorial in the latest issue of Pablo's journal Fourth International, Autumn 1960, outlines the tasks in Britain as follows:

'The central task of British revolutionary Marxists consist in regrouping, inside the Labour Party, all these scattered forces of the Labour left - without being sectarian or ultimatic, without artificially imposing on them a "leadership" parachuted from outside - around a programme of transitional demands, in order to take by assault first the "dominant positions" of the movement itself and then a series of "dominant positions" of capitalist society as a whole.'

The prospect of building a revolutionary Marxist party has completely disappeared so far as the Pabloites are concerned. The reference to parachutists in this passage is generally understood here to refer to the SLL and its orthodox Trotskyist outlook and method.

The situation in Britain has changed tremendously since 1953. From the trade unions has come a powerful movement to the Left which has succeeded in radicalising the Labour Party to an extent not experienced before in its history. We are poised on the brink of a split between the forces of the Left and the Right. The witch-hunt against the Socialist Labour League in 1959 was part of the preparation for this showdown. The formation of the Socialist Labour League strengthened enormously the ideological and organizational basis of our movement. Whilst in the initial stage of the witch-hunt we suffered some casualties through expulsions from the Labour Party, nevertheless, we have been able during the past year not only to make good these losses but in addition, to organize an important campaign around the defence of Clause Four and the promotion of a policy for implementing this clause. This has brought our comrades into closer relationship with some of the Left centrists in the 'Victory for Socialism' organization, whom we can influence and from whom we can recruit.

It is, however, the work amongst the youth which has been most decisive. We had recently the national youth conference where between 150 and 170 young people launched our youth paper as a national paper of the Young Socialists. The Gait-skellites' reply was a further witch-hunt which is now in full swing. There is

every indication that this struggle against the socialist youth will merge with the general struggle against the Left in the Labour Party. It has already roused many Labour Party members to realization of what a wrecking task the Gaitskellites are engaged upon. The youth movement is therefore today a potentially great force in the radicalization of the adult movement.

We have, in fact, made considerable strides forward in our Labour Party work since the formation of the Socialist Labour League. Pablo's 'deep entry' theory flows from his whole revisionist course. It is not a question of a mere tactical misunderstanding; it springs directly from the basic reasons for the 1953 split.

The type of policy that Pablo advocates for Britain today would dissolve our movement in the marsh of centrism. That is why his few remaining disciples stumble from one crisis to another. The political yardstick of Pabloism is not his letter of congratulation to you on the presidential campaign but his policy for such an important political situation as exists in Britain today.

Even now, while the SLL campaigns for the release of Pablo, the Pabloites still continue to help the witch-hunters against our youth paper. When our comrades go into action in Young Socialist branches with resolutions opposing the ban, the Pabloites propose counter-resolutions asking the Labour policemen at Transport House 'for information!'. Of course they are being defeated wherever they show their faces, but the political lines which they pursue remain as clear to us now as they were in 1953.

During the past seven years we have outlined in the Open Letter of Comrade Sinclair to Germain and in the Labour Review editorial of August 1959, our political estimation of the evolution of Pabloism. We believe that these statements are correct and we stand today by the main political arguments set out in these articles.

In his letter to the Indian comrade Kolpe (a man who was prominent in the organization of a demonstration outside the Chinese embassy in Bombay as a protest against the Chinese 'attack' on Tibet) Comrade Hansen writes in a most apologetic way about the behaviour of the British comrades; in doing this he dissociates himself from our editorial in the Labour Review of August 1959. 'Personally,' he writes, 'I would agree with you that this article was not well conceived.'

Comrade Hansen thought it necessary to mildly repudiate us in his letter to Kolpe, without having sent a copy of this correspondence to us in advance. Naturally Kolpe will have sent such a document to the Pabloite Germain. It is equally to be understood that Pierre Frank's greeting to the SWP on the occasion of the Presidential election is a sign that we may be once more on the eve of new 'unity' manoeuvres.

The political purpose of these, so far as the Pabloites are concerned, will be another attempt, as in 1957, to split the SWP from the Socialist Labour League.

It is our opinion that a considerable amount of time has already been wasted in this type of abortive unity discussion. What is needed in the international movement today is a political statement by the orthodox Trotskyists of where we stand on the great problems of the day. Without this international political declaration, it will be impossible to rebuild the international movement. This can be clearly seen from the crisis which exists in Ceylon and in our own movement in the Argentine. The development of a most promising movement in Japan can only be continued on the basis of such an international reaffirmation of principles. If there are any in the Pabloite ranks who are disturbed by their experiences of

Pabloism, then they too can be assisted forward politically in this way only.

This international document must be followed up by a series of articles analysing the revisionist course of Pabloism. It is a vital pre-condition for the development of the Fourth International that we break finally from all traces of such revisionism. If we do not make this break now, then our movement will, in the opinion of the SLL, suffer its most severe crisis in a period of its greatest opportunity.

It is well-known internationally that the SLL is deeply indebted to the great and constant political assistance given to it in the past by the Socialist Workers' Party. Unfortunately, because of the laws in your country you have in recent years been prevented from actively participating in the international work of the Trotskyist movement, but you have made it possible for our movement in Britain to avoid many of the difficulties experienced during the early, formative years of the SWP in the USA.

We believe that the political collaboration of our two sections constitutes a major factor in the international movement, but we must now speak frankly. We cannot agree to the type of political argument engaged in by Comrade Hansen in his letters to Kolpe. We cannot under any circumstances agree that the political differences between ourselves and the Pabloites are growing less. We were disturbed by the article by Murry Weiss in the latest International Socialist Review, by the recent editorial in the Militant on the Russian Revolution which skated over the question of the bureaucracy; and by your presentation of developments in Cuba, which recalls Frank's characterization of that country as a workers' state.

In a few weeks we shall be sending you a draft resolution on international questions. We urge you to discuss this resolution and let us have your opinions. We especially need to know your opinions on Pabloism at the present time. Arising from such joint work we propose the preparation of an international congress of all orthodox Trotskyists as soon as it can possibly be arranged.

We want your political assistance in preparing this conference, although we appreciate that you cannot participate in it because of the laws of your country. An international bulletin should be established forthwith to open an international discussion amongst the orthodox Trotskyists of all countries.

We feel that if this is done our movement will quickly recover the political initiative which was provided by your open letter in 1953.

We look forward to your reply.

Yours fraternally,

NATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE
SOCIALIST LABOUR LEAGUE

New York, N.Y.
February 6, 1961

To the National Committee
Socialist Labour League

Dear Comrades:

At its January meeting our National Committee reviewed the problems of world Trotskyism, and in particular the seven-and-a-half-year split in its ranks. All those attending received a copy of your letter of January 2 on this same question and carefully considered the views you put before them.

After discussion, the National Committee accepted a report expressing the following views which it directed our Political Committee to convey to you:

1. We see nothing substantially new in the world Trotskyist movement since 1957 which would require us to reconsider the position reached in common with you at that time on the need and desirability of unifying the international forces of Trotskyism on a principled basis.

A way of achieving this was suggested by Comrade Cannon in his 1957 letter to Leslie Goonawardene; namely, a parity arrangement that would guarantee the rights of both sides, thus permitting a central leadership to attempt comradely collaboration in an atmosphere free from the possibility of organizational manipulation.

This proposal was, unfortunately, rejected by the comrades of the International Secretariat. Still worse, it was deliberately misrepresented as an attack on the principle of democratic centralism. And instead of following a policy aimed at alleviating organizational frictions, they engaged in a series of unprincipled factional maneuvers, particularly in Britain, that greatly sharpened relations and made unification unrealistic as an immediate practical goal.

The I.S. followed this course in accordance with concepts that led to the split in 1953 and which would, under present limitations of the movement, tend to establish a monolithic international organization disposed to intervene excessively in the internal life of the various sections to the detriment of the normal development of competent national leaderships. We oppose this concept of a monolithic structure, this arbitrary way of functioning, and this practice of substituting tactical prescriptions for principled political leadership -- and not only in the case of the I.S. but wherever they may appear.

2. We believe that the chief existing differences between the I.S. and ourselves -- and the main obstacles to unification -- come from (1) our conflicting conceptions on the internal life of the world movement and (2) the purpose and practice of entrism. We differ with the I.S. on the ways and means of constructing national parties and of building the international movement and administering it at the present stage of its development. We are opposed to the concept that makes the international center nothing but a literary

and technical apparatus operating outside all control. But with a parity arrangement, it should be possible to discuss these and the remaining political differences and come to conclusions about them in a democratic manner. In stating this, we are not reaching a new conclusion but simply again expressing the view which we reached together with you in discussions beginning in 1957 and which were reaffirmed as recently as a year ago.

3. The developments in England since 1957 brought into sharp focus our differences with the I.S. leaders on how to build national revolutionary parties. The reprehensible actions and attitude of the I.S. leaders -- which have effectively blocked unification -- flow from their tactic of permanent and passive entrism in certain countries. Their refusal to support the Socialist Labour League in its life-and-death struggle against the witch-hunters not only violates the elementary principle of class solidarity but reveals the insincerity of their protestations about the desirability of unity. Leaders eager to promote the unification of the revolutionary vanguard would not have hesitated a moment to make clear their solidarity with the largest group of Trotskyists in that part of the world. That is why we have viewed the attitude of the I.S. leadership toward the Socialist Labour League as a crucial test of their sincerity in advocating unity.

4. Under such circumstances, the efforts of the I.S. leaders to counterpose the "reasonable" American Trotskyists to the "wild" English Trotskyists and to praise the one at the expense of the other can only be taken as a divisive maneuver which has no chance of success.

5. Despite this unfavorable record of the actual attempts to reunify world Trotskyism, we remain firmly convinced that unification would be very advantageous for the world movement if it can be effected on a realistic and workable basis along the lines we have previously indicated in our proposals of 1957.

Great new opportunities for Trotskyism, signalized by such events as the Cuban Revolution, the freedom struggles in the Mideast and Africa, the upsurge in Japan, the Belgian general strike, etc., are now opening before us. If our movement were united we could take much better advantage of them and achieve a much faster rate of growth in many areas and on a much more solid foundation than is possible with a movement split into factions warring over issues which they are unable to make clear to the socialist-minded working-class vanguard. This is felt among members of both sides in the Trotskyist movement, increasing the insistence that the problem be solved one way or another. A recent instructive instance in this regard being the experience in Japan.

6. Consequently we consider the line of freezing and attempting to deepen the division between the two groupings of the world movement and stepping up the organizational struggle against the Pabloite "centrists, revisionists and liquidationists," as urged in your communication, to be politically unwarranted and not in consonance with the most imperative needs of the world Trotskyist movement. In fact it plays into the hands of the rabid factionalists on the

side of the I.S. who are in reality opposed to unity and who advance the slogan of unity only as a "clever" factional maneuver.

As indicated above, we have no reason to deny our differences on political and organizational questions with leading members of the I.S. and we have not concealed them. But we cannot agree with your opinion that our political differences with the I.S. have increased to the point of irreconcilability. On the contrary, we have noted nothing since the question was last discussed with you that would indicate we should revise the view that the political differences on some key questions have diminished to the point where unification is possible and justifiable and that we must make it our responsibility to follow policies that will facilitate this objective.

It might be added that even on the basis of the appraisal you advance in your letter of January 2 on the differences between the two Trotskyist tendencies, the course you propose is, under present circumstances, not necessarily the best suited to struggle against the influence of incorrect ideas within the international movement. For example, the Japanese comrades, who from their own experiences are no less opposed than you or we to the organizational concepts and practices of the I.S., urge unification as the best means of effectively combatting Pabloism. We believe that their experiences and their views warrant the closest attention and study not only for what they reveal about the desirability of unity but also as one more warning that the older, more experienced sections must give active guidance in seeking the best possible solution to the problem.

7. We agree with you that a thorough discussion of these and other international questions is overdue and should now be undertaken. We await with keen interest your draft resolution along with the documents promised by the Japanese comrades and those that may be forthcoming from other countries. As a contribution to the discussion, we intend to offer documents stating our own views on the major questions. Among these will be a more detailed reply to many questions raised in your January 2 letter.

8. We are certain that this discussion can be conducted in the friendly spirit of close collaboration that has marked our common work for the past seven and a half years; and, for our part, we will do our utmost to maintain that spirit and to oppose any tendency toward factionalism that might arise in our own ranks should the differences that have now appeared prove to be sharper than might be at first expected.

Fraternally yours,
POLITICAL COMMITTEE
SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY

24th February, 1961

TO: THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE OF
THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY

Dear Comrades:

Your letter of February 6 seems to indicate that your differences with Pabloism now center around what you feel to be the dangers of organizational manipulation of the international movement and the question of entry.

If this is all that is involved then, of course, unity is possible. In the history of our movement there have been many examples of clique leadership whose manipulation of the organizations they led created no end of difficulties for the orthodox Trotskyists. The case of the Revolutionary Communist Party in England is one that comes readily to mind. The leaders of that group would not permit its minority representation on the Political Committee and for sixteen months after the fusion of 1944 we did not have a tendency representative on the National Committee. Yet we managed to continue under such conditions.

Entry is a tactical question and provided there is common ground on program, it should not in any way constitute an obstacle to unification. This was the main lesson of the intervention in 1938 by Comrade Cannon in Britain. At that time, the Workers International League refused to unify with the other groups and utilized the question of entry as one of the reasons for not doing so.

We do not accept your position on these questions. We believe that the reasons for the split in 1953 were not of a tactical nature. They arose from a revision by Pablo of Trotskyist principles which had been growing in the international movement for several years, i.e., the theory of centuries of "degenerated workers states." In your "Open Letter" of 1953, you studied this development. Since that time the various Pabloite conferences have continued to develop their policies quite consistently in line with those which gave rise to the split in 1953.

In effect, Pabloism revises the whole concept of the Marxist party. When it adopts an entry tactic either into the Communist or Social-Democratic parties, it conceives of its policy as one of pressure and maneuvering amongst the centrists in these organizations. From time to time, individual Pabloites may win positions of importance here and there in these movements, but this is far removed from the training of revolutionary cadres. Our conception of entry is to combine the participation of our movement in the class struggle and to utilize this struggle for the purpose of combating Stalinists and Social-Democrats on their own ground.

In Belgium and Britain the Pabloites have bowed to the pressure of the Left centrists in the Social-Democratic parties. In Italy and France they have attempted to use the centrists as a front in the Stalinist parties and train their people not as revolutionary fighters, but as apparatus maneuverers. In the bourgeois national movements, such as the FLN, they subordinate themselves to the activity of such organizations. They become functionaries of these movements without any real base in the ranks.

Here again they oftentimes gain posts of responsibility only to have no organized movement whatsoever behind them.

This position follows logically from Pablo's theory of centuries of degenerated workers states. They see our task as one of putting pressure on the bureaucracies. Only now, in 1961, it should be plain for all to see that in practice this means the destruction of the Trotskyist cadres.

We cannot accept your argument that it is not possible to make clear the differences between ourselves and the Pabloites to workers. We did it most successfully in Britain during the period of the 1956 crisis in Stalinism. We have had no difficulty inside the youth movement. Naturally enough there have been people who are confused. In the majority of cases we have been able to clarify them, but as is always the case a few centrist elements remain unclear because in any case they like to continue like that.

We are pretty sure that in Belgium we would have no difficulties whatever in separating ourselves from Ernest Mandel.

It depends on the type of milieu we are directed towards. We can understand that in the United States where the unfavorable objective situation has temporarily isolated our movement, the milieu in such circles as those associated with the Socialist Regroupment experience will find it very difficult to understand many things, but that is in any case not a new experience with these types of centrists. This breed traditionally resorts to unity talks and the like in order to obscure their hostility to Marxist politics, especially to the construction of the revolutionary party.

We have had a long experience with them inside the Left of the Labor Party. If there is now a change towards the Socialist Labour League from the Victory for Socialism group it is not because the traditional centrists have changed their politics but because the Marxists have maintained firmness on principle. This is winning over the waverers.

We cannot therefore accept the arguments set forth in your letter of February 6.

We feel that an international discussion must be organized first within the ranks of the International Committee and then, if it is possible, with the Pabloites along the lines we have already suggested. They will find it most difficult to resist such an approach. Even if they do, the most important question is to first of all clarify our own ranks. The forces of the International Committee are the hard core of orthodox Trotskyism on a world scale. Our first political duty is to them.

Yours fraternally,

NATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE
SOCIALIST LABOUR LEAGUE

MEMORANDUM ON THE WORLD MOVEMENT

Submitted to the National Committee by Tim Wohlforth

It is extremely important that, after several years in which there has been almost no organized discussion among orthodox Trotskyists throughout the world, an important political and organizational discussion has begun. It already seems as if the discussion will be a thorough one and a frank one -- the only kind of discussion which is going to get us any closer to a solution of the extremely difficult problems our world movement faces.

The Trotskyist movement has been passing through a period of the most deep-going political and organizational crisis over the past ten years, and although we can now begin to see our way a bit better, we are not yet completely out of it. It is highly important to understand the objective causes of this process which has so racked and destroyed our precious small forces.

We are paying the price for the failure of the workers' revolution in Europe in the immediate postwar period. Following this first severe crisis, the capitalists, with the essential aid of the Stalinists and Social Democrats, have been able to stabilize their rule in the leading metropolitan countries and guarantee for a while a prosperity which has had such a deleterious effect on the class struggle in the metropolitan countries. The relative docility of the working classes in these countries has tended to strengthen the hold of the traditional reformist and Stalinist parties over the working class and has had an extremely harmful effect on the vanguard. Thus, the relative isolation of the Trotskyist parties in the major countries throughout the world and the inability of these parties to seriously intervene in the class struggle and to grow.

If this were not bad enough, a series of world events has occurred which has caused severe ideological dislocations for our movement. The absence of any significant intervention into world politics by the advanced working class has been combined with a quite opposite development which has produced some very contradictory results. The colonial revolution has pushed forward at such a rate that in China, North Korea, Vietnam and partially in Cuba it has broken outside capitalist bounds. However, this breakthrough has taken place not under our leadership nor in alliance with the advanced workers in other countries. Of course, the long-range effects of these developments is to seriously weaken world capitalism and to bring its day of doom that much closer. However, for us a not unimportant by-product of these developments is that they encourage an ideological tendency to slight the role of the conscious vanguard in history and to rely on a sort of unconscious objective revolutionary process.

The world Trotskyist movement, to the extent that it has not retreated from reality through sectarianism (and this has taken a heavy toll), has been plagued with another and by no means less dangerous disease -- Pabloism. By Pabloism I mean a tendency to underplay the importance of the vanguard to historical processes substituting for the vanguard the unrolling, panoramic objective wave of leaderless revolution. The theory works something like this: The objective conditions of the collapse of capitalism and the

growth of the workers states propel the masses into action. These masses then force the reformists, the bureaucrats, the Stalinists, the centrists (in fact anybody but ourselves) further and further along the path of revolution. The role of the Trotskyist vanguard is relegated to that of a pressure group (the British call it a "ginger group") to exert pressure on the existing leaderships of the workers' organizations.

This necessitates organizationally a "deep entry" of the revolutionary forces into the mass organizations and once inside these organizations the minimization of their independent role. The Trotskyist is not inside the alien party (it begins to look less and less "alien" to him) to build the vanguard party but rather to pressure the leadership or the centrists who in turn pressure the leadership. Floating in the stratosphere far above the pressure groups in the existing mass parties is the INTERNATIONAL CENTER which produces magazines in several languages which more or less brilliantly speculate on the constantly advancing world revolution and develop pretty theoretical constructions to explain these developments.

It is not at all surprising that Pabloism, as expressed by Pablo himself, combines with the above approach a high handed cavalier attitude towards the historically-formed cadres of Trotskyism. The size of these forces are relatively unimportant to him as he looks elsewhere than to the revolutionary vanguard for the real motive force of history. Thus to split and destroy cadres is no organizational idiosyncrasy of Pablo's but rather the logical outcome of a theoretical approach which places little value in the subjective factor in the revolutionary process.

An Initiative Gained and Lost

The Open Letter of the SWP and the world-wide split that it precipitated was an extremely necessary step not only to counter the organizational methods of Pablo but to reaffirm the fundamentals of Trotskyism in the face of the political revisionism of Pablo which lay behind the organizational methods. (Jim Cannon formulated the relationship between the political and organizational differences between the IC and I.S. quite well in his letter of January 26 1954 to Goonewardene: "The first concern of Trotskyists always has been, and should be now, the defense of our doctrine. That is the first principle. The second principle, giving life to the first, is the protection of the historically-created cadres against any attempt to disrupt or disperse them.") This step decisively gave the world initiative to the IC and orthodox Trotskyism and augered well for the reorganization and growth of the world movement on sound political grounds.

However, this initiative slipped through our hands as the IC failed to really function as an alternative center to Pablo while Pablo continued to keep an active world center going (though not much else). This was perhaps unavoidable because of severe financial and personnel limitations but it was still bad. Without a dynamic center of orthodox Trotskyism and a continuing political struggle against revisionism it was inevitable that we would be

able neither to make any real inroads into Pablo's ranks or prevent a further decomposition of our own forces internationally.

Despite all this the past seven years has provided decisive vindication for orthodox Trotskyism. It has only been the groups supporting the IC or in ideological solidarity with it (as is the case of the SWP) that have significantly grown in this period. Most impressive has been the growth of the British group to a point where it now includes in membership more Trotskyists than all the supporters of Pablo in the world combined with the possible exception of the dissolute LSSP. The development of Trotskyism in Japan has been just as impressive if not more so. The modest growth and vitality of the SWP and of the Canadians likewise points up the same thing.

While we lost a certain initiative in the world movement from 1954 to 1957, we completely disoriented and confused the world movement with our unity proposals to the Pabloites in the period from 1957. The first letter to Goonewardene (March 12, 1957) notes that "the two sides appeared to come closer together than was the case in the period prior to the formal split." It further states: "A consistent approach of both sides toward common positions on the political questions of the day would justify a deliberate and serious attempt at reunification. . . ." The current letter of the PC majority to the SLL (January 31, 1961) acts as if what was tentatively stated in 1957 is now a proven fact. "We have noted nothing since the question was last discussed with you," the document reads, "that would indicate we should revise the view that the political differences on some key questions have diminished to the point where unification is possible and justifiable. . . ."

Once noting a certain coming together of formal views, at least on the Russian question (but hadn't Pablo already pulled back on this question quite a bit before the split), all emphasis was then put on the organizational solution to the split. Therefore in the intervening three years little or nothing has been done to seriously explore whether or not there is a political basis for unity. The confusion over the organizational proposals and counter-proposals simply played into Pablo's hands as it once again gave him in effect a certificate from us that he was a Trotskyist and that his political line was essentially correct. Under such conditions it is not surprising that there has been little resistance to his ideas inside the I.S. organizations.

Has Pabloism Really Changed?

Has Pabloism (I refer here not simply to Pablo personally but to that body of thought and approach towards building the party originally associated with him and still adhered to by the leading circles of the I.S. and its supporters internationally) really changed that much over the years? If one looked at Pabloism in 1953 as essentially a pro-Stalinist tendency then certainly a case can be made for this proposition. There is no doubt that on the Hungarian events the Pabloites took a strong anti-Stalinist position. But is this really Pabloism? Did not the real pro-Stalinists (like Clark, Mestre, Lawrence) break with Pablo?

If one looks at Pabloism as a centrist tendency which theoretically minimizes the role of the vanguard and in practice destroys the vanguard then Pabloism has not changed -- rather its nature has become far clearer over the past seven years. (It is interesting that a rereading of the document "Against Pabloite Revisionism" passed at the 25th Anniversary Plenum shows that this document is for the most part still applicable to Pabloism today for it, even then, saw Pabloism as far more than simply a pro-Stalinist deviation.) If this latter approach is correct then the failure of the SWP to really convince our co-thinkers in the IC to actively work for unity with the Pabloites and conversely the refusal of the Pabloites on their part to really work for unity with the IC is not simply a matter of uncontrolled factionalism -- it is rather an expression of the real political gulf that exists between Trotskyism and centrism.

Let us first look at the theoretical approach of the Pabloites today. Here I feel the SLL has done a pretty good job in pinning down the evasive formulations of the Pabloites both in their letter to our NC and in their International Perspectives Resolution. I have not seen the resolutions of the recently concluded Pabloite Congress and I will have to withhold my comments on these documents until a later date. However, a perusal of their latest magazine (Fall, 1960, Fourth International) is enough to give one some inkling of their approach. I will run through some of the material quickly:

1. The lead editorial, "The Situation on the Eve of the Sixth World Congress," This editorial presents the Pabloite view of the ever expanding wave of revolution which has reached the point, they feel, where the chances of imperialism establishing national capitalist states in Africa "seem to be small, not to say non-existent" as "in the majority of cases the necessary social and political premises are lacking." Thus they feel that Africa also will be swept clear of capitalism even though the working class is extremely small and our forces virtually non-existent. Further, the counter-revolutionary influence of Stalinism in the colonial revolution is minimized: "The union between workers' states and the colonial revolution constantly becomes closer, in spite of the bureaucracy and its peaceful coexistence." At no time this editorial, which is supposed to relate the world situation to the Sixth World Congress, is the state of the Trotskyist forces discussed in relation to this wave of revolution (even in the negative). In fact, with small terminological changes, it could appear as an editorial in the Monthly Review.

2. The editorial, "Decisive Hours of the British Labor Movement." Here, as the SLL has commented, the Pabloites see "the central task of British revolutionary Marxists" not building of the revolutionary vanguard itself, but rather "regrouping, inside the Labour Party, all these scattered forces of the labor left." In other words, rather than build the vanguard, the Pabloites propose to utilize the vanguard as a pressure group to form a broad centrist wing of the Labor Party.

3. The Documents section includes a short article "on Ceylon." It is, in reality, a kid-gloves treatment of the criminal act against the working class perpetrated by the LSSP's support of a capitalist government. Nowhere is this traitorous policy clearly attacked as a popular front one.

4. "An Open Letter to the Leadership and Members of the Chinese Communist Party." This document, which is addressed to the leaders as well as members of this Stalinist party, starts "comrades." The letter is written from the political outlook of 1928 whereby not only the Chinese Stalinists but all Stalinist parties are simply a part of the "communist movement" which includes the Pabloites. Again we have cropping up this Deutscherite concept from the 1953 period: "The successes of the Chinese Revolution liquidate the subjective bases of Stalinism in your own rank and file as they earlier liquidated the objective ones." The document ends with a call, not for the building of a Trotskyist party in China, but rather "for the revolutionary-Marxist renovation of the communist movement."

And this is only one issue of the FI! Comrades, don't you think that perhaps we should at least explore the level of political agreement before we plunge into all sorts of organizational proposals?

But if one still has doubts about the reflection in theory of the revisionist approach of the Pabloites, one only has to look at the level of the concrete tasks of building the revolutionary party and there is no room left for doubt! After seven long years of his own organization, what has Pablo to show for his efforts? Has he built one single party in one single country which has shown any vitality, any ability to grow, any real roots in the working class? The answer is clearly no. But the record is more damaging than that -- Pablo has effectively dulled the revolutionary independence of his own forces and done his best to destroy those vital Trotskyist forces (e.g., England and Japan) that have shown their ability to grow. A political tendency which attempts to destroy the revolutionary vanguard is our mortal enemy no matter how much this tendency vows loyalty to Trotskyism! Just as Lenin had to struggle against every centrist tendency which attempted to dull the revolutionary consciousness, to throttle the independence of the party in order to build the party that led a successful revolution, so must we today follow in his footsteps.

The experience of the SLL is familiar to all our comrades. The British comrades have given us a model of how to build the vanguard under conditions which necessitate entry into the BLP and to do so without compromising in the slightest to the BLP leadership or to the centrists within the BLP. The role of the Pabloites in Britain, both in their opposition to the formation of the SLL (what is clearer than their support of Cadogan?), and in their failure to build a movement on their basis is also familiar to the comrades. The experience of Belgium may not be so well known. Here one of the key leaders of the Pabloite organization has been personally in charge of the Trotskyist forces in the country. Please read

the attached article from the Newsletter on the role of La Gauche in the recent Belgium General Strike. Then ask yourself -- can such people build the revolutionary party? Is it only a small "tactical" difference that separates us from them? Can we unite under the same umbrella the builders and the destroyers of the revolutionary party?

What Is To Be Done?

If unity is out of the question right now then what should we do? The first thing that is necessary is for the orthodox Trotskyists throughout the world to work out their common ideas as clearly as possible. One of the difficulties over the past period has been that the relative inactivity of the IC has contributed to the political problems within the IC itself. Until the IC can clarify its views it will not be in much shape to worry about its tactical approach to the I.S.

The SLL International Perspectives Resolution is an excellent step in this direction. It clearly states once again the fundamentals of Trotskyism and applies these fundamentals intelligently to the world of today. Its essential approach is to reiterate once again the central and determining role of the advanced metropolitan countries in the world revolutionary process and to put us once again back into that process. It clearly states that the Trotskyist vanguard party is essential for the success of the revolution in every country of the world: in China and Yugoslavia as well as in Russia; in Ghana, Guinea and Cuba as well as in India; and of course in the advanced capitalist countries.

We are all, of course, in agreement with this general political approach which we originally formulated in 1953 as against Pablo. In fact Jim Cannon's letter to the PC of June 17, 1960, clearly enunciated this point. He stated:

"These two developments in France and Germany (De Gaulle coming to power and the retreat of the SPD from a socialist program -- TW), which have their general reflection throughout western Europe, have weighed heavily against the unthinking impression of steady and consistent advance of the international revolution by way of the colonial and semicolonial upsurge. The Chinese Revolution, and its reverberations throughout Asia, Africa and Latin America, are mighty factors upsetting the stability of world imperialism. So also, in their own way, have been the struggle and pressure for workers' democracy in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. But all these tremendous developments taken together could not be properly considered as a substitute for the proletarian revolution in the industrially advanced countries which are the center of imperialist power.

"Up to now we have not sufficiently criticized and stigmatized the fuzzy thinking which has optimistically pictured the world as steadily advancing toward socialism by way of industrial progress in the Soviet Union and China and in the colonial revolts. In my opinion, this is nothing but an expanded version of the original theory of Socialism in One Country."

What makes the reaffirmation of this basic approach so important is -- to put it frankly -- that there has emerged a certain tendency in our own ranks to adopt certain Pabloite approaches to some questions. I do not know of any other way to characterize the trend of Swaback and Liang's thinking on the Chinese question which has reached the point of adopting the posture of being the loyal left wing of Mao. The party leadership quite correctly spotted this trend far before I did and countered it.

However the recent theories of Hansen on the Cuba question are of a similar order but this time the party leadership, rather than condemning these Pabloite theories, has embraced them. I am referring here, not to the question of the nature of the state particularly, but rather to the giving up of a perspective for an independent Trotskyist party in Cuba. The comrades rely instead on "convincing" Castro and transforming the petty-bourgeois Castro movement into a Trotskyist party. Joe's conception of the reformability of the Cuban CP through mass pressure is of the same stripe.

In addition to holding a political discussion within the IC we should encourage the reactivation of a world center for orthodox Trotskyism (even though our organization is barred by law from participating in such a world body). We should not allow the present split with Pablo to excuse our own lack of international initiative. This does not mean we have to go "whole hog" with a formal congress, etc. But the essence of international organization and functioning must be preserved.

Finally we must launch a propaganda offensive against the Pabloite theoretical concepts and Pabloite deep-entry policy of destroying the independence of the vanguard. This must of course be done in an intelligent manner so as to try to reach those internationally who either do not understand the international split and therefore have abstained from organizational involvement with either the IC or I.S. and those who may support Pablo out of fetishism about the International rather than political agreement (a strong factor in Latin America). The question here is not how we present our ideas -- but that we present them!

In order to facilitate the reaching of the ranks of those sections affiliated with the Pabloite international an approach along the lines of that spelled out in the SLL International Perspectives Resolution seems sensible. That is, we should approach the I.S., not with a proposal to set up a parity commission to organize an immediate World Congress on the assumption that political agreement exists; rather, we should approach Pablo with a proposal to set up such a parity committee simply to regulate a joint discussion in the ranks of the I.S. and IC affiliates to see to what extent there is political agreement. (It goes without saying that if there is political agreement we will put forward the excellent organizational proposals for reorganizing the International that we have already worked out.) Should the I.S. accept such a proposal then this will facilitate our reaching their ranks with our ideas. Should it turn it down, as it probably would, this would raise questions in the minds of many of the I.S. supporters as to why the I.S. fears a real political discussion of political issues.

In any event we should organize a discussion within the IC ranks and this necessitates our supporting the SLL proposal (see January 2 letter) for setting up an international discussion bulletin. This modest step can help quite a bit in spurring on the political process necessary to the rebuilding of the world Trotskyist movement.

It is only along this path that we will be able to build strong national sections of our movement as well as a strong international organization. We must give these international questions the most careful consideration for we will not be able to build a healthy party in this country without the fullest ideological participation in the international movement in the traditions of the Trotskyist movement and the early CI.

March 8, 1961.

From The Newsletter -- January 28, 1961 (page 2)

Tom Kemp
was sent to Belgium by
The Newsletter, this is
the third of his reports.

CLASS STRUGGLE IN BELGIUM

Left Failed to Seize Opportunities

APART from the Communist Party, whose policy stood well within the bounds accepted by the official leadership, the only alternative line was offered in the special strike editions of the left-wing weekly, 'La Gauche'. This paper has been published for four years as a kind of equivalent to the 'Tribune' in Britain. Some reports have spoken of it (as well as of Renard) as 'Bevanite' -- it may be truer of the paper than of the trade union leader, at any rate if we judge by what we find in its pages.

Given a situation such as that in Belgium there should have been considerable opportunities for the building of a strong left wing in the party and the trade unions. It was not enough, however, to build a left wing of opinion, which is mainly what 'La Gauche' has done; it was also necessary to build, at any rate in embryo, a leadership which could come forward and function as an alternative to the official figures when they proved their impotence. For that it was necessary to have roots in the organised labour movement and to establish an accepted position of authority amongst workers; outside the youth movement nothing has been done in this direction.

It is true, however, that 'La Gauche' does have some standing among a certain number of militant workers and is recognized as the voice of the left wing in the Socialist party. During the strike it was self-consciously putting forward slogans and a programme for the movement, not that it wished to establish a claim to be an alternative leadership, but primarily because it thought that it could help to create a current from below which would induce the leaders already in position to take them over as their own. Therefore, the slogans, and especially the programme, did not go outside what these very leaders in public statements and conference resolutions had committed themselves to accepting but did not explicitly link up with the strike against the 'Single Law'.

Two Calls

The policy put forward by 'La Gauche' consisted of a call for a march on Brussels. This was the main slogan raised at meetings and demonstrations. It was said that if such a march were to take place (as a kind of cross between Aldermaston and a hunger march) it would require the setting up of an organization along the route and in the capital itself. It would also focus the energies of the strikers on a precise object and prevent them being aimlessly dissipated. These arguments contain some sound sense. If such a march had been organized it could have changed the climate in the capital and strengthened the hand of strikers in the north. What was to happen in Brussels was left vague and since the slogan was not accompanied by any other positive calls to action by the strikers (other than the setting up of committees -- for what?) it was inadequate and did not provide strikers with the issue for which many of them were looking.

The other main call was for 'structural reforms' of a social and economic kind notably: a free national health service; nationalization of power

industries; full employment and economic planning; control of the trusts; tighten up on tax evasion; halve the military budget; a Public Investment Board.

Pressure Politics

This programme, in line with the policy of the Belgian Socialist Party, was hoped by some of its advocates to mean a mortal blow to Belgian capitalism, at least in the conditions brought about by the strike. But they were none too clear about this. Thus Ernest Mandel wrote in 'La Gauche' of December 24:

'It is not necessary to participate in the government to get satisfaction on the essential points. Under the pressure of the strike, Parliament can be led to refuse the 'Single Law' and to take other laws into consideration....

'It is sufficient if the Social Christian M Ps listen to the voice of their own electors, that they take up position under the pressure of the strike on their own mandates, for a new parliamentary majority to emerge at least on these two questions: withdrawal of the 'Single Law', vote of an outline law on tax reform and structural reforms.'

This was presumably what was meant by 'Strike to a finish', another slogan of 'La Gauche'. It is true that some other statements in this journal seemed of a more militant character. In articles in the issues of January 1 and January 8 Jacques Yerna stated that while being profoundly attached to social and political democracy they (i.e., the team around 'La Gauche') did not believe in it as it functioned in Belgium' and that it could not be substituted for the direct action of the masses. In fact he opted for the trade union leaders (Renard?) who preferred 'direct action' to the Socialist Party leaders who acted within the framework of a Parliament 'dominated by a few powerful financial concerns who falsify its work'.

What a reader groping towards some way of escape from the Belgian crisis would get from 'La Gauche' would be a few slogans and a confused prospect ranging from putting pressure on Social Christian M Ps to 'direct action' by trade union leaders.

The reporter of 'L'Express', a French weekly closely identified with the views of ex-Premier Mendes-France, who went to 'La Gauche' for his information about economic and political conditions in Belgium, put his finger on an important point. In the issue of December 29 he wrote of the 'structural reforms':

'This economic programme, remarkably moderate for a Frenchman or even an Italian, but which in Belgium passes for revolutionary, gives a first impression of the outdatedness of the apparatus and methods of Belgian capitalism.'

Only Confusion

Let the same journalist continue, as he did the following week (L'Express, January 4):

'Rarely has a general strike, insurrectional by its tone and its sharpness, been undertaken for such reasonably moderate demands. The weekly, "La Gauche", organ of the Belgian "Bevanites", speaks of "assuring by the general strike the supremacy of Labour over Capital once and for all"; and "La Wallonie", the daily of Andre Renard (who is for Belgian Socialism what Bevan was to the British) speaks of "making the regime bend in time to avert the worst, if not on the other

side of the grave". However, this shock language, recalling the revolutionary syndicalism of fifty years ago is here in the service of a programme which France realised fifteen years ago and which M. Baumgartner (Minister of Finance and former boss of the Bank of France) could himself agree with: planning, full employment, control of the trusts, nationalization of the coal mines, gas and electricity (nothing more). [my emphasis -- T.K.]

From this it is clear that the 'structural reforms', derived as they were from the minimum programme of Social democracy, are perfectly compatible with the maintenance of Belgium capitalism and could be accepted by its more enlightened supporters under favorable circumstances. At the same time to adopt such a programme is, for the left, to become its prisoner -- and this is what 'La Gauche' seems to have done, so that it wins sympathetic references in newspapers of the left bourgeoisie, but does not make much headway amongst the working class. After all, the present leaders have declared, in effect, that they are for the implementation of such a programme in good time -- i.e., when they have a parliamentary majority, or join a coalition. Insofar, then, as the working class supports its present leaders, and whatever their misgivings about their role in the strike, the programme of 'La Gauche' seems gratuitous and its activity that, not of an alternative leadership, but of a pressure group.

Unfulfilled Task

In the meantime, unfortunately, the direction of the energies of an important section of left moving workers, of Marxist socialists and, especially, of the socialist youth into this channel has left the major task unfulfilled -- that is of building the basis of a new movement and leadership. Consequently the left wing has been unable to move effectively. While it can claim to have clean hands that is partly because it has not got down to real business; in fact it shares responsibility for the serious difficulties which the Belgian movement is likely to face in the future. It may gain support from those who break away from the old-line leaders. But its leaders and militants, supporters of 'La Gauche' and 'Jeune Garde', need to make full and frank assessment of the line taken in the strike which, if persisted in, will leave the movement a prey to misleaders and adventurers.

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