

SWP

discussion bulletin

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LOOKING BEYOND THE FREEDOM NOW DRAFT RESOLUTION

By R. Vernon

The PC Freedom Now draft resolution, which is the best resolution on the Negro struggle to appear to date in the view of the Negro comrades in New York, is already due for serious overhaul and revision. For one thing, the mass struggles in Birmingham and Jackson have marked a new stage in the Southern struggle and in the struggle nationwide. For another, the entire national picture of complacency has been irreversibly shaken up -- we are no longer living in a country of apparently unruffled social stability. And again, the reinforced demands and new techniques in the struggle for jobs in the North to cope with the high unemployment among Negroes, the explosion of combativity in the Northern ghettos, must be taken cognizance of in a modified resolution.

But these are points which fall within the range of understanding of theoretically able white Marxists, and will not be dealt with here. Before the ink is dry on the final form of the resolution, new events worth including in its scope will certainly have taken place.

It is precisely the strongest and most vital portion of the Resolution, that dealing with the nature and implications of Black Nationalism, which will be criticized and supplemented in what follows. Remarks bearing on proposals suggested are numbered. Because of the unfamiliarity of white comrades with the background of the question, however, the motivation of the criticisms is far more important than their exact formulation. Whether a particular concept is codified in the Resolution is less important than whether the new concept gets across to most of the membership.

1) Black Nationalism is the natural product of the black ghetto in the integrated Northern city (New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles, Boston). The black nationalists are our natural neighbors in the Northern big cities, and our fellow radicals, sharing much in common with us in their rejection of the society and alignment with colonial revolution.

2) The nationalists of the Northern ghettos and the integration-oriented Southern freedom fighters form two poles of the struggle which do not fully understand or appreciate each other, regarding each other with unnecessary mistrust, doctrinaire ultimatism, and sectarianism. Marxists must seek to understand the nature and dynamics and the natural arena and limitations of these two general approaches. Marxists have an important role awaiting them in aiding the conscious synthesis of these two poles, and helping to promote the most combative and conscious aspects of the two poles.

3) One crucial contributing factor to nationalism and separatism, nowhere mentioned in the Resolution, is the fact that U.S. society really has nothing much to offer the Negro people, even if facilities are integrated here and there, or even all over.

4) Separatist nationalism is a more direct groping toward socialism than integration is. Separatism feeds strongly on the feeling among black ghetto workers that the American Way of Life offers no hopes and no prospects to Negroes. Nationalism may grow stronger in the South to the degree that integration is successful.

5) It is important to distinguish between integrationists and assimilationists, as well as between separatists and nationalists. All assimilationists are integrationists, but not all integrationists are assimilationists.

6) The anti-American component of Black Nationalism is making itself heard with vehemence. Rejection of the American mystique and the American Dream is deepening in Negro communities North and South.

7) The slogan of Negro-White Unity and propaganda based on the desired alliance between Negro and white workers is now received with skepticism, hostility and derision by Negroes.

8) Antagonisms between white and black workers, between the revolutionary Negro thrust and the conservatized labor movement, may get worse before they improve. The party must face these problems now. For background on these points:

1) Despite the fact that radicals are concentrated in their overwhelming majority in the large industrial cities of the North and West, their attention is almost always riveted on the Southern aspect of the Negro struggle. The politics and thinking of the black ghettos have been evolving, in the absence of political activity in the unions, in directions which are new and perplexing to all white radicals, and even to Negro Marxists, and are only now beginning to be understood. Fixated on integration, radicals have been unable to see that the concept of integration has little appeal in the Northern ghetto, and they mistakenly interpret the lack of interest in integration as a low point and an undesirable feature in the struggle.

The SWP must be "turned on" to the thinking, aspirations, and possible modes of struggle of the black ghettos. The potentialities for struggle in the North are no less formidable than in the South, and most SWPers are already in the Northern cities and will remain there, despite any exhortations to attempt adventures in the South which is even more unfamiliar. There is nothing much to integrate in the North, without tearing apart the whole society, and the issues of

economic struggle and political power are on the order of the day.

2) There exists a considerable gap between the attitudes of workers in the black ghettos and Negroes in the Southland. For workers in the integrated Northern cities, integration holds no appeal comparable to its appeal in the South. Nationalism and separatism are highly plausible in the crowded ghetto slums, whose problems lie in the area of economic breakthroughs, political power, and nationalist consciousness. But ghetto nationalists lose appreciation for the fact that Southern Negroes are beset by a million and one humiliations, cruelties, physical inconveniences, which must be eliminated NOW, HERE, and ALL of them.

Southern Negroes cannot afford to wait to smash the forms of Jim Crow; without political power, they have no realistic perspective of building any independent Negro-controlled system of parallel facilities. Southern Negroes find it difficult to make much sense out of the separatist leanings, and Northern nationalists disdainfully sneer at the Southern Negroes' apparent longing to be "accepted" and "loved" by crackers.

But Negroes in Dixie are not really that eager to be merged with crackers; they simply want to get that big white foot off their neck and get a chance to breathe. Southern Negroes have to fight for the right to use the transportation facilities, public toilets, even have to fight to go through the day without being humiliated at every turn.

Many nationalists look down upon the integration struggles in the South with a contemptuous air, projecting the needs, conditions, and inferences of their own ghetto life onto the Southern scene which presents added difficulties to Negroes. In evolving their own dynamic ideology of a total and uncompromising break with the existing rotten American society, many nationalists attack not only the senseless goal of assimilation, and false integration tactics, but also the very vital and unpostponable necessities of the Southern struggle.

Increasing numbers of Negroes, North and South, are becoming at least intuitively aware that the various forms of struggle correspond to different regional or class needs, and that "we need all of them, Dr. Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, CORE, the SNCC kids, Adam Clayton Powell, they're all doing a good job." The SWF will be "saying something" worth hearing to Negroes when its members and press can present a cogent picture and analysis of the entire struggle, pointing up the best of each aspect and criticizing, not one-sidedly, but in the light of the progress of the entire struggle.

We need not rail intemperately at this geographical disunity. The one-mindedness of the Northern black nationalists has been an important factor in the elaboration of the powerful and invigorating nationalist ideology which impels the

Northern Negroes forward.

3) It is surprising that revolutionists should obtusely ignore the fact that an important reason for Negroes' turning their back on U.S. society is that the society has nothing worthwhile to offer. Revolutionists, after all, refuse to "integrate" with certain aspects of the society on coming to the same conclusion in their own way. Failure to see this point means failure to understand nationalism and separatism. For more on this point, cf. R. Vernon, Vol. 24, No. 11, pages 8-12.

4) The discussion on separatism completely ignores some of the most interesting aspects of the question. The statement in the Resolution is correct, as far as it goes. But while it is pointless to argue with nationalists that separatism is utopian (for reasons probed in my bulletin, Vol. 24, No. 11, pages 5-7, 10-14), for our own purposes we must realize that separation is impossible without completely destroying the social fabric of the U.S. first.

(There may be comrades who feel that the U.S. could present a viable alternative of a separate region of the country to Negroes. Under what conceivable conditions?? This seems to be facile mechanical thinking devoid of relation to real forces. It will have to be argued.)

It is valuable and encouraging to realize that, in the absence of a powerful radical movement, separatist nationalism is a more direct groping toward socialism than integrationism is. In their total rejection of the American Way of Life as offering no hope and no prospects to Negroes, the black ghetto workers are making a first step in the direction of a socialist alternative. That they do not see it this way subjectively does not lessen the importance of our seeing it. Of course, it would be foolish to take a paternalistic attitude here, insisting to Negroes, for most of whom the concept "socialism" has no special appeal per se (and especially not when coming from the mouths of white Americans), that that is what they really want. That can become clear only when African nations head in a real socialist direction, or when radicalism again sweeps through the white workers.

Although the South is predominantly integrationist in orientation, there is a considerable and formidable nationalist potential beneath the surface. The integration drive of Southern Negroes aims at breaking down specific Jim Crow barriers, and not primarily at merging or assimilating socially and ethnically with crackers. The gap between the Negro and white populations in Dixieland is even greater than in the North. Subjective failings on the part of Northern ghetto nationalists, particularly their sectarianism and lack of flexibility in adapting to the needs and aspirations of Southern Negroes living under somewhat different conditions, constitute a major barrier to overt nationalism in the South, and this is a factor which can be corrected. Nationalism would certainly sweep the South if it were as integrated as the North.

Integration and separation as such are not the only alternatives in the structuring of Negro-white relations "comes the Revolution." Intermediate social organizations must also be envisaged, e.g. a multi-national state involving no geographical separation, but one in which Negroes maintain autonomous and independent cultural and political institutions (political parties, separate elementary school system controlled independently by Negroes and promoting Negro culture) and otherwise participate on an equal level in running the society, as is theoretically the case with ethnic minorities in the Soviet Union, China, Yugoslavia.

The change in the relationship of forces between the powerful Negro vanguard and the pitifully weak white radical movement should be reflected in the attitude on self-determination. Previously, white radicals sought to assure Negroes that their wishes with respect to total integration or total separation would be respected by the revolutionary (white) proletarian workers state on taking power. This obsolete attitude still persists. It is self-evident now that the Negro struggle is already on an independent footing and will have a major say-so in any future radicalism in the U.S., both in action and theoretically. Negroes are not going to come hat in hand begging white revolutionists to be on the level with them. What Negroes decide will be implicitly and explicitly prominent in any radical program.

Still, the "separate nation" question is taken up too literally, reflecting the mechanistic theoretical preoccupations pervading the white radical movement. It is still viewed as a choice to be made in the future, with the Negro masses for the most part "uncommitted" today, rather than as a regional discrepancy. The old implication remains that separatism is a bourgeois diversion, even granted one or two good points, and that the best variant is a two-stage process whereby Negroes first integrate into the existing society and then join with their brother white workers for a proletarian revolution.

5) So far, the party fails to distinguish between integrationists and assimilationists. All assimilationists are integrationists, but not all integrationists are assimilationists. We might try defining an assimilationist as an integrationist with no nationalist feeling. An assimilationist identifies himself (in feeling, not just in words) as an American first, and Negro only second. Assimilationists want only, and all of, what (they think) other Americans have, and want to share everything with white Americans, including America's faults and crimes. They are horrified at the thought of being "different."

The term integrationism need not imply any definitive attitude or decision on the society as a whole, but simply a striving to eliminate particular manifestations of Jim Crow humiliation, segregation, economic victimization, denial of public facilities, etc. One might be both nationalist and

integrationist. It would be impossible to be both nationalist and assimilationist (except in the sense of harboring ambivalent and transitional attitudes). In making these distinctions between integration, assimilation, nationalism and separatism, we must remember that distinctions made and understood in the SWP are not necessarily shared or used with the same range of meanings by the Negro community as a whole or by anyone else.

Assimilationists are not to be disparaged or written off. Neither assimilationists nor nationalists are Uncle Toms, nor totally impractical, nor out of contact with us. Assimilationists will not be able to achieve their goal (on a mass scale) under capitalism any more than nationalists. Assimilationists are more and more combative and defiant in their demands to be merged into the American scene. People dominated by an assimilationist mentality constituted the majority of Negro radicals (i.e. those recruited to white-radical parties) in the past, and can be recruited now and in the future. No less important, frustrations experienced in the seemingly futile, senseless, and self-debasing quest to be merged into white America rapidly convert today's assimilationist into tomorrow's bitter intransigent nationalist.

James Baldwin's attempt at defining nationalism (F.C. Resolution, page 6) is completely inadequate for our purposes and does not deserve place in our Resolution. I prefer the statement in my bulletin (Vol. 24, No. 11, page 11: "A Negro is a nationalist in direct proportion to the extent of his rejection of...white society and his self-identification with Negroes as a distinct people.") But this is not enough either. The definition of nationalism is intertwined with the definition of its opposite, assimilationism. The question is still open.

6) The question of Negro anti-Americanism is discussed at length in my article. In essence, when Negroes feel or express their hostility toward whites, they (all Negroes, not just conscious nationalists) mean: not Swedish farmers, or Khrushchev, or the mayor of Paris, but Americans. The others are white, true; but the American is the White Man.

So many observers are noting the sweep of rejection of America and the American mystique by Negroes these days that it seems the radicals are the last ones to notice it. Generally, Negroes feel this as hostility toward whites and their stinking country, not as explicitly hostility toward the American image per se, although this explicit rejection is becoming more common. But explicitly or implicitly, increasing numbers of Negroes fail to identify with John Glenn, JFK, Jackie and Carolyn, our Founding Forefathers, Old Glory, I pledge allegiance..., the Halls of Montezuma, the Free World, the Melting Pot, tall Texans, our American Heritage, Uncle Sam our national figure, clean-cut American boys, gracious living, Southern hospitality, rugged individualism, and all that trash. The deprecation of everything white and everything

American is an objective necessity and not a diversion in word-magic. American symbols must be trampled in the mud as part of the process of liberating and elaborating a black ethnic personality. The flooding of Negroes with white symbols constitutes a cultural aggression, even a mild form of genocide. This anti-Americanism, unlike the rejection seen in some white American intellectuals, is not limited to sensitive and hypersensitive rootless intellectuals, and does not entail an alienation from one's own people.

A word of caution: Negroes flaunting their anti-Americanism for whatever political or emotional reasons may still look suspiciously at white radicals who proudly congratulate them for their spirit and egg them on further. At some point, the reactionaries will focus on these manifestations as a weapon with which to whip up chauvinistic and xenophobic (!) hatred against Negroes. At the moment, the reactionaries are probably taken aback by the idea that people born in the "greatest country in the world" don't appreciate how lucky they are, and it wouldn't help their "image" or "prestige" abroad to broadcast the fact or to draw attention to it.

In the Resolution, page 6, top: "...an oppressed minority without a clearly defined geographical, language, or cultural basis for differentiation from their oppressors" is incorrect. There certainly is a basis for cultural differentiation, however unclearly defined. Negroes are defining it with greater clarity and greater vehemence with each passing day.

"...the national character of the Negro has little to do with what part of the country he lives in. Wherever he lives, he is restricted. His 'national boundaries' are the color of his skin, his racial characteristics, and the social conditions within his sub-cultural world." (Harold Cruse, Studies on the Left, Vol. 2, No. 3, 1962). This statement hits some nail on the head. It may seem like a poetic pun or flippant comment to white Marxists. But to Negroes the words elicit a profound and serious and, yes, poetic, response.

7) Negroes in both North and South are perfectly well aware that their economic problems are paramount. But white-radical propaganda on this topic always misses its mark by centering its attention on the unions, Negro-white unity, "the workers," etc., which most Negroes (and not just "some nationalists outside the unions") look upon with a jaundiced eye.

The need for political action is also widely recognized among Negroes, and here again too much talk about a Labor Party and getting together with the unions will, at least at present, vitiate the effectiveness of SWP propaganda.

There is no need to preach to Negroes on Negro-White unity. On the contrary, it would be better, in addressing Negroes specifically, to stay off the topic until some fire starts smoldering in the labor movement, so that Negroes can

see who all they might expect to unite with. Of course, it will not offend or bore Negroes to see the SWP scold the labor leadership for not coming to the aid of Negroes, but in many instances more weight should be given to talking with, at, and through Negroes in our press, and less to castigating a labor movement which is not even listening to us.

The majority of rank-and-file white unionists are neither hardened enemies of Negroes (except in the South) nor militant sympathizers and allies (except for a handful). They just don't give a damn. The labor bureaucracy doesn't have to work overtime or jeopardize its position to hold the white workers back from coming in droves to the aid of embattled Negroes. Ain't nobody coming -- yet. Well fed, living better than most of the rest of humanity, out of contact with the aspirations of peoples outside of the advanced countries, white workers lack any strong feelings of solidarity with Negroes, Cubans, Viet Nameese, or anyone else.

This situation is gingerly approached in sections VII and IX of the resolution. But the gap between the Negro outlook and the white-radical outlook is much greater than suggested there. In defense of their position, white radicals offer the existence of mysterious "molecular processes" and slight stirrings in trade-union activity, as if this were evidence of political rebellion of the sort Negroes would be impressed by on the part of the white workers. Some minimum of activity on bread-and-butter questions or job conditions takes place in any labor movement that exists at all. But what Negroes need and want to see is a battling labor movement shaking the country, or some reasonable trend in that direction, then the words "Negro-White unity" will regain some meaning.

Is any important purpose served by refusing to "blame" the white workers? Negroes certainly do not hesitate to "blame" them, and feel estranged by the white-radical mystique on this question.

Negroes are, of course, not at all anti-union and won't become anti-union no matter how low their confidence in the labor movement Establishment sinks. Negroes are irrevocably integrated into the working class and into the ranks of the proletarian unemployed.

8) The party must face the possibility of increased hostility between the white and black populations of the United States, and the possibility of head-on clashes between the rebellious Negro people and the entrenched labor movement, with most of the white workers siding with the bureaucrats. Race riots between white and black neighborhoods in industrial cities as well as in Southern communities are possible. This is the worst variant of several possible variants, and must be faced squarely. All revolutions have to have a 1905. Harping on the "need for Negro-White unity," about the party's

duty to explain to Negroes the economic basis of Jim Crow, about how "the bosses will benefit" from clashes between white and black workers, will be of little value.

The party must take its side squarely on the side of the revolutionary people not only against the open racists, but also against those aspects of the organized labor movement which make the labor movement part of the Establishment, part of the White Power Structure. The "states rights" of the organized labor movement, in the form of inviolability of seniority patterns, medieval craft unionism which bars Negroes from skilled jobs and paying construction work, need not be sacred relics to revolutionists. Our focus should be on the really oppressed workers, and not on the more prosperous and conservatized heroes of the sit-down strikes of way back thirty years ago, not to mention the callous craft trade unionists who are completely lacking in class solidarity and are frequently haughty and chauvinist toward their Negro and Puerto Rican or Mexican "brothers."

To Negro workers, the capitalist government is not necessarily worse than the ossified, leaden labor movement Establishment, and where they see the need they will not hesitate to use government machinery, as well as mass picket lines and demonstrations, to pry open the trade-union barriers to jobs and upgrading. An attempt by Negroes to decertify a hidebound chauvinist "union" means an attempt to replace it with a better and real fighting union, and not an attempt to bring about an open shop. It will be fortunate if comrades "get off the train" at this point, and invoke a sacred litany of "trade unions good, capitalist government bad" against the unruly Negroes who refuse to listen to "Marxist" reason.

Now, some proposals on particular passages in the Resolution:

III. paragraph 2, page 5: "Remove these conditions..." There is an implication here that black nationalism is both transitory and undesirable. Black nationalism always has been around and always will be. More on this later.

Page 8, last paragraph of III. The example of Cuba is an inspiration for socialism, not in particular for integration (cf. Vol. 24, No. 11).

V. a. "Northern Negroes...have greater difficulties in throwing off the shackles of the reformist bureaucracies." What bureaucracies are holding back Northern Negroes? AFL-CIO, NALC, and NAACP are apparently in mind. But Negroes in the North do not participate en masse in the NAACP, they do not look to the NAACP or to the unions for leadership, in general. In the unions it is the inertia and indifference of the white workers, as much as the bureaucracy, which holds things back. The Black Muslims are the only mass organization capable of holding things back, and that doesn't seem to be their

intention, or in their interests. If the Muslims knew how, they would apparently impel the struggle even further. The situation in the North is almost wide open -- only leadership, bold and realistic strategy, and full consciousness are dragging behind.

V. c. "...the political side of the struggle in the South...has a far more radical edge than in the North." This, if true, is accidental, in the light of the foregoing, and may be reversed overnight. The politics of the Northern ghetto is in general in advance of the South. Many radicals need bifocals, so they can see the potentialities of the North as well as of the South.

VI. This section discusses what the capitalist state might do and is doing to fight integration, but no attention is given to how it may combat nationalism. In addition to the points mentioned at the end of my article, Vol. 24, No. 11, we must consider the potentialities of the capitalist state power in direct frontal clashes with nationalism through witch-hunting, financial harassment, promotion of more bourgeois or accommodationist tendencies, campaigns to instigate hostility on the part of assimilationists and on the part of the white population in general against Negroes who are so "disloyal" as not to appreciate the Land of the Free. The groundwork is already being laid for a hate campaign against the Muslims as a "hate group." The bourgeoisie smashed the Garvey movement once; this time its job will be a lot tougher one.

On Isolation from the Movement

Is the long period of isolation and stagnation coming to an end, with the upturn in the Negro struggle? The question requires further analysis. It is certainly coming to an end in the time-scale of years, but with respect to the time-scale of months and weeks we shall have to ask: which aspect of isolation? Isolation from the workers as a whole? Beginning of participation in struggles? End of isolation from the Negro movement? Possibility of recruiting of Negroes?

The new winds stirring such organizations as NAACP and CORE to serious activity with mass participation in the North are ending that phase of the isolation which prevents white comrades from taking an active part in some aspect of the Negro struggle. These organizations are advancing slogans and techniques of a Transitional-Program type, in their desperate attempt to run to catch up to and keep up with the Negro masses.

Recruitment of Negroes directly to the SWP will still be difficult in the immediate period, and may continue to be difficult for some time ahead. At present, Negroes in the Northern ghettos are in no mood to join any organization peopled or dominated by whites. Heightened "integrationist" struggles may draw in Negroes not decisively oriented in a nationalist direction.

It is not necessarily true that "the best Negroes will find their way to us." Many of "the best," i.e. the most radical and revolutionary-minded, will most likely steer clear of us and any other white-radical organization, even if some improvements are made in tactics, propaganda, and understanding in the immediate period. This is not in any way a fault of the leadership (unless the leadership is to be blamed for being born white); the profound gap between black radicalism and white radicalism in the US must be understood in its proper context as a historically inevitable phenomenon. It may be temporary -- but it exists right now and will persist for some time. Nor is it all a big tragedy: the fact that black radicals want to do their thinking, organizing, and deciding carries deep-going revolutionary implications and assures that the job will be done far more thoroughly in the next phase, with little chance of betrayal or destructive interference by whites.

The traditional integrationist organizations, NAACP, CORE, and Urban League, are being stirred and frightened into activity in new areas, for new goals, and with new techniques. Breathing down their necks are the specters of separatism and revolutionary nationalism. It would be a serious mistake for white comrades to read into any increased wave of "integrationist" activity in the North a subsidence or rejection of nationalist trends and attitudes. Black Nationalism has always been around and always will be around even under socialism. Black Nationalism has always been, and always will be, a problem when not understood and a tremendous opportunity when understood and used to advantage.

We do well to make the most of our opportunities now to study the complex phenomenon of Black Nationalism at this time when it blossoms forth in a relatively pure state and in its full beauty, the better to understand it when it appears in diluted and distorted forms in other contexts or at other times.

An understanding of nationalism is vital in every phase of work in this area, for optimum results, or for any results at all, even in talking to, working with, or recruiting integrationists.

Even if Negroes were joining the party in droves, Black Nationalism would still constitute a problem, and has been such in the past and present in diluted form, in the way Negro comrades conceive of the party as white and of white comrades as "they", not "we" -- people of greatly different background and outlook with different preoccupations, different criteria and emotional climate. Nationalism shows its marks negatively in the failure of the party to hold on to Negroes recruited in the late 40's through periods of stagnation, and positively in the enthusiasm shown today by some Negro comrades toward the nationalist aspect of the struggle, an enthusiasm never exhibited toward the party's integration-oriented activities or program.

Rev. Cleage of Detroit correctly states (ISR, Spring 1963, p. 61) that Negroes suspect all whites, however friendly they appear, of wanting to get off the train at some point. The stations where white radicals most readily want to get off at are: 1) when Negroes want to separate from "our" American society; 2) when Negroes start talking about building up economic power and black-owned businesses in the black communities; 3) when Negroes refuse to respect the inviolability of the organized trade-union movement; 4) when Negroes shunt out or drive out meddling and know-it-all preaching white radicals from the Negro neighborhoods, or exclude them from all-Negro organizations.

The elimination of meddlesome and bungling white liberals and radicals from important sectors of the Negro struggle through the agency of intransigent black nationalism has had a decidedly beneficial effect on the nationalist aspect of the struggle. Such whites are always ready and eager to bombard any Negro listeners they can get hold of with their involved but irrelevant "theories" and advice. Less educated ghetto Negroes sometimes have difficulty refuting this verbiage point-by-point or by counterposing a fully rounded and elaborated view to it. But Negroes have no difficulty in seeing that their would-be white instructors have nothing to offer, have no understanding of the situation, are conducting a one-way dialog, and in some cases are in effect saboteurs if not just nuisances.

The elimination of white-liberal and white-radical ideology from the market place of ideas in the depths of the Negro ghetto has encouraged the flowering of a red-hot and seething nationalist ideology which really reaches people, really moves people, builds solid backbone in previously defeated or bewildered Negroes, paves the way for a break with the surrounding society and everything about it which is deeper and more thorough-going, in the emotional sense, in real life and action, than any rival ideology which might have been forthcoming from other quarters. Marxists, black and white, who are capable of learning something from the masses and capable of responding to a revolutionary impetus can face both the immediate and the long-term future with confidence.

We have much to learn and, first, much to unlearn. What we have to teach will be worthless and uncommunicable unless we first learn to tune in on the new revolutionary sentiment and ideas. Our own revolutionary machinery and our potential contributions will be useless as a rusty appliance that isn't plugged in if we can't couple it to the living struggle.

Because of unavoidable historical reasons, the overwhelming majority of what few trained Marxists or people professing to be Marxists exist in the US are white, were born white and have always been white (and will remain white the rest of their lives), think white, write white, talk white, theorize white, sloganize white, and respond white. Almost

all Americans with an elaborately developed Marxist background have been whites and have left a conspicuous white-American-radical stamp on their politics, vocabulary, and traditions. A reversal of this trend may be in the offing, since the Negro struggle is now producing the beginnings of an independently acting and independently thinking cadre which will infuse fresh minds and fresh experience into revolutionary thinking and action. In 1963, while most Marxists and "Marxists" are white, most radicals (nationalist and Integrationist) are Negro.

This means a huge new audience for revolutionary Marxism, once certain difficulties have been overcome, and a far-reaching enrichment and reinvigoration of the theory and practice of Marxism by fresh forces with fresh insights.

June 1963

END

ON THE N.Y. CUBAN-CRISIS DEMONSTRATION

By Fred Halstead

For the benefit of those comrades outside of New York who may be confused by the statements of comrade Myra Tanner Weiss on pages 9 and 10 of her June 3 document regarding the participation of the New York branch in the demonstrations around the Cuban crisis, I would like to set the record straight. I am one of the members of the branch who had some responsibility for carrying out the branch policy and who thought then and thinks now that the policy was correct.

Myra states: "Concrete manifestations of our sectarian mistakes are seen in the following: One of our state-wide N.Y. candidates during the Cuban crisis in 1962 went on the air calling for a demonstration at Times Square that never took place, showing at least lack of realism in estimating the relationship of forces within the peace movement. To top that, in New York we refused support to the biggest demonstration that was held on Sunday, participating only in the smaller demonstration on Saturday. Fortunately, this position was not taken publicly -- but it was taken."

My memory of the events is as follows:

Kennedy made his brink-of war speech on Monday evening, October 22, 1962. By coincidence a forum was scheduled for the same evening by one of the N.Y. peace groups. A number of activists and leaders of peace and radical groups spontaneously showed up at the forum after Kennedy's speech and discussed what to do.

Our comrades there proposed a united, broad, non-exclusive demonstration for the next Saturday around the simple point of opposition to a war on Cuba. We proposed Times Square. This was entirely realistic. There had been constant discussion in the peace movement on this since the successful Times Square demonstration against the resumption of H-Tests in March of 1962. We knew the proposal was on the lips of many activists and it was enthusiastically received at the meeting except by certain timid pacifist leaders and "reform Democrats."

These emphasized that for them it was less important that the demonstration be big than that it be "responsible" and that it be pitched not to "alienate" but to "influence" persons in the Kennedy administration. It was our estimation -- and I remain convinced that it was accurate -- that this right-wing position did not have the support of the ranks of the peace and radical movements. The bulk of these wanted a big action that would take a slap at Kennedy's war move and get widespread publicity. One thousand people in Times Square get more publicity than ten times that number at the UN Plaza.

After the forum meeting broke up, a small group of the more conservative "peace" leaders retired to a meeting of their own, specifically excluding all others who tried to get in. A second meeting then took place-- of those excluded. This included several radical groups, Fair Play for Cuba, and a few "left wing" peace leaders. An ad hoc committee was formed then and there which issued a call for the Times Square demonstration. Fair Play supported it. We favored this development.

We were under no illusion that the ad hoc group had the authority or the access to mailing lists among the peace activists that the entrenched leaders had. But we knew that the entrenched leaders were hesitant to call any big demonstration and that if they did call one, they would attempt to exclude the left wing, and a section of them would try to impose a pro-Kennedy line.

Our reasoning was that having the call issued by the ad hoc group -- which was broad enough to have some standing beyond the radicals -- would put the conservative leaders on the spot, either exposing them or forcing them to call a demonstration. It might also, we hoped, put the ad hoc group in a position to bargain with the other leaders for non-exclusion.

Our Senatorial candidate spoke on radio and TV on Tuesday and gave publicity to the call by the ad hoc group. (The Militant, Nov. 5) He did not call the demonstration in the name of the SWP, as implied by comrade Myra.

Then the police illegally banned the Times Square demonstration. The ad hoc group decided to change the place of the Saturday demonstration to the UN. We decided this partial retreat was necessary because of a weakening among some of the ad hoc group elements. This was only partly due to fear of the police. It was also due to a change in the political situation -- a new hope in "coexistence" on the part of CP-influenced elements, an office manager of Fair Play, etc., following Khrushchev's letter to Kennedy offering the inspection-of-Cuba deal.

It was after the mailing on the Saturday non-exclusive action at the UN had gone out that the right wing "peace" leaders finally announced the Sunday demonstration. They specified exclusion of all signs that were not of the abstract "peace" type or which did not put equal guilt on the U.S. and the USSR for the Cuban crisis.

We then had several basic choices of action. 1) We could capitulate to the right wing by calling off the Saturday demonstration and joining the Sunday one without rights, without signs against the aggression against Cuba and without our own literature. This course was indeed advocated by persons under CP influence. 2) We could

support the Saturday demonstration and stay away from the Sunday one. 3) We could organize a confrontation against the right-wing at the Sunday demonstration, showing up with "Hands off Cuba" signs, etc., in effect trying to take the demonstration away from the right wing. 4) We could support the Saturday demonstration and participate in the Sunday one with our own literature, but avoid a massive confrontation.

In my opinion, the first choice would have been incorrect in principle; the second would have been needlessly abstentionist; the third would have been correct, if possible, but it wasn't tactically realistic. We decided on the last course of action. On Saturday, two thousand persons showed up and marched with signs such as "Hands off Cuba." This actually built up the crowd of 10,000 for Sunday and contributed to the temper of the people then, which turned out to be more militant than the right-wingers would have liked. (See New America, Nov. 10, 1962). On Sunday, we appeared, as did our Senatorial candidate. We sold our own literature, passed out our SWP election platforms and material exposing Kennedy's role in Cuba. A few right-wing monitors tried to stop us, but got no sympathy from us or from demonstrators who saw what was going on.

Our policy throughout was to polarize the growing and widespread anti-Kennedy sentiment among the peace activists, and to allow it expression; to push our political line on peace through transitional slogans; and to fight for the democratic rights of the militants -- whose rights were being denied.

For the revolutionary party in our time and circumstances, that is what the fight for democracy is all about -- leading the struggle of the newly radicalizing forces to express their will, in spite of and against the slick tricks and brutal power moves of the entrenched class collaborationist bureaucracies. That is no easy thing. It is complex and requires the tactical flexibility, firmness of principle and discipline of a "combat party," not the loose debating society which Myra's document seems to indicate she would have the SWP become.

June 1963

DISCIPLINE AND TRUTH -- Reply to Wohlforth

--by Mage, Robertson and White for the Minority Tendency

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Finally, Wohlforth makes a summation as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

local who stood between the two groupings. All this adds up to an intolerable situation for the Philips-Wohlforth group.

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

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

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

The Evidence

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

The first piece of evidence appended is a lengthy circular letter of October 18, 1961, by Robertson in which he criticizes Wohlforth's stewardship of the Minority since the previous Convention and proposes a new course. Throughout, the letter is written in an impersonal, unfactional vein without mentioning

whose line and whose errors are being dealt with. The viewpoint of this letter found a majority of supporters among New York Minority comrades and from that time, in disputed issues, Wohlforth was in a minority within the Tendency locally. All this took place six months before the incident came up which Wohlforth claims precipitated inner-Tendency factionalism. Perhaps the most central and controlling idea in the Robertson letter as a whole is the point made in the following paragraph:

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

The second item is a hasty letter by Robertson written nearly a year later, October 7, 1962. This letter contains the writer's first reactions upon seeing the Wohlforth 'Toward the Working Class'. At that time and within the Tendency, the Robertson letter made a detailed, indignant and emphatic denial of accusations of breaking party discipline. Moreover it offered an analysis of Wohlforth's purposes in making such charges.

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

There is one other little point which should not escape the comrades' notice. The Wohlforth piece, 'Party and Class,' went into the bulletin with such timing that in the normal course of events we would not have seen it until after the

July 3 deadline for bulletin material--too late for us to reply. Even now we are only able to make the most limited, essential, and hasty answer. But hasty or not, there is one thing that had better be clear. We warn the Philips-Wohlforth group that with their latest substitution of slander in place of politics, our patience is now at an end. Should we be the butt of any further conduct along these lines, our reply will not be circumspect.

Conclusion

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

'The Minority declares:

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

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

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

July 2, 1963

Appendix 1.

EDITED COPY

(deleted portions in party files)

New York City
October 18, 1961

Ed Lee,
Oakland, Calif.

Dear Ed,

I'm taking a couple days off work in order to formulate my notes and incorporate them into this letter to you. The intersection of events in the past couple of weeks both within the American...movement and of IC-SWP developments have forced a stock-taking, reevaluation and affirmation of our working perspectives. And I mean taking a hard look at a more fundamental level than the merely tactical, 180 degree turns which have been executed every few weeks in the period since the party convention.

Within the American movement: In the post-party convention period we have in part sinned against our intended underlying perspective. At the very first gatherings of comrades of our tendency in NYC brought together because of the needs of factional struggle for the pre-convention period, I recall explaining that we were embarking on a long, hard road and one which the party would react to with all the considerable means at its disposal.... This was then and since even put forth as sort of a slogan: 'To Transform Ourselves...Into a Tendency in the Movement as a Whole'.... And to do this not merely as an organizational defense measure, but as a process of the political delineation of our minority as that of the consistent Trotskyists within the party.

You were at the national gathering just after the party convention when we recognized without dissent that the period of working as a faction was over with the close of the convention and that we would seek to consolidate and extend ourselves in the next period in the more general form of a political tendency within the movement. At that point prospects along these lines were pretty good, if modest: we had with the excellent pre-convention and convention arguments won a general recognition for ourselves as 'the American minority'. But since then we have not gone forward.

...

To put our error in general form: we continued to work as a faction, rather than as a tendency. A faction is a group-
ing organized for struggle, emphasizing internal discipline,
mobilizing for and executing uniform tactics, etc. A tendency
is a grouping of comrades who hold essentially the same viewpoint

on more-or-less fundamental questions and who may be, but are not necessarily organized for power struggles, i.e., a faction. (For a brief refresher I recommend rereading Cannon's 'Faction Struggle and Party Leadership' in the Nov.-Dec. 1953 FI.) Additionally, preoccupation with mere organizational questions places us most fully at the mercy of the party leadership's mastery of organizational judo, i.e., puts the plane of struggle within the sphere of the party's greatest competence--handling org. questions.

At the same time that we were drawn into extending ourselves in organizational struggles we entirely failed to move in other directions. I.e., until just two nights ago and then on the basis of this present perspective, the NYC tendency comrades never have had a political discussion as such! Even for example Mage's Cuba resolution was presented to the party for convention vote with neither discussion nor vote on it by its proponents (many of whom accepted it only in a general way). And the needs of a factional center in NYC have determined our geographic allocation of forces up until the present time.

The widening breach in the International Committee: The present situation in the IC, opened by the SLL letter to the SWP of Jan. 2, '61, has gone rapidly through several stages. (1) The SLL began by finally moving to put some life in the IC for the first time and toward the aim of reconstructing a Trotskyist International. It sought to win the concurrence of the SWP and at the same time very gently warned the SWP that political weaknesses had been noticed of late within the American Party (e.g., unity sentiments toward the Pablo grouping). What was essentially new was that the SLL would no longer be held off from these aims by the private demurrs of the passive and obscuring SWP. From now on things were to be out in the open within the IC. The SWP refused to visibly react in any direction in the ensuing correspondence series, almost entirely one sided, from SLL to SWP leading bodies. (2) Then the SLL brought out its draft world resolution (about which you will recall my enthusiasm when I talked with you when on tour, because, as I put it, the draft contained points which I had thought were even personal prejudices on my part and shared by no one else.) The draft contained a section which said among other things: 'The revolutionaries in the SWP need periodically to take a hard look at themselves and check over their political work constantly.' The party response was to bring out its own draft international resolution which by its objectivist methodology and gaping evasions served to sharpen the concern of the SLL leadership. (3) In June the party printed in the internal bulletin the Cannon letters of the previous month which said: 'The breach between us and Gerry is obviously widening.' and '...I get the definite impression that the SLL is off on an

Oehlerite binge.' In July at the IC session in which the SLL won a clear majority, C. Slaughter, main reporter to the meeting, concluded his summary with the no longer implied or gentle: 'The question that follows from the SWP resolution today is: why not liquidate the Trotskyist parties? We must stop this trend before it is too late.' The SWP has ignored the invitation to defend its views at the next IC meeting and has never replied directly to these or earlier SLL criticisms. It was the reading of the Slaughter report two weeks ago which pushed me to look at our situation, since open rupture is plainly a near thing.

I believe that the SLL is doubly correct vis a vis the SWP. First that the SLL-IC position on the central task of the Trotskyists is incontestible--the need for a revolutionary Marxist International, not an international publicity agency for assorted 'leftward-moving' bureaucracies. Further, that the resulting critique of SWP views and motion is true. Second, and given the first part, it is then incumbent upon the SLL to force clarification within the IC by moving through all the stages necessary to achieve a real political discussion and consolidation within a world body which can then become an international instrument instead of the passive, semi-fiction of the past 8 years. The internal deadlock must be broken, even though it places us within the SWP in an extremely precarious, but also important, position.

What the main elements in our perspective must be: With the foregoing as a preliminary let me move into the question of what is indicated for us to do. To recapitulate--the growing dissatisfaction with mere tactical zig-zags...together with the recognition of the implications for us of the trend of SLL-SWP relations are together what has led to the determination for a real assessment.

If the present course of IC developments are followed out along their current path, there will be a collision and an organizational rupture. The SWP will not long endure the present level of pressure on it to discuss, rather viewing this pressure as sectarian name calling and insults. But it will not acquiesce to an intra-IC discussion either, since that would contradict the course actively being followed: e.g., right now Hansen is in Latin America seeking to get next to the kinds of forces which the IC would like to debate how rotten they are.

The SWP tops have an easy and natural rationale to cover a split from the IC and one which the SWP is already largely prepared for: 'We choose to openly discuss with all Trotskyist and leftward moving forces in the world on an equal basis and seeking common actions and fraternal solidarity. We have

tried to deal with the unfortunately disoriented IC comrades in the same spirit, only they won't have it, so we choose to continue on the broader road of general fraternal relations, not into an ingrown isolation.' I can hear Dobbs saying it at a plenum in which a split is passed off as really a move toward unity in 'the big picture'.

We have a primary duty to our political views and goals to the future of Trotskyism in this country, i.e., the American revolution. This duty entails (1) to uphold the views which we share with the IC majority, and (2) therefore to urge and stand for the maintenance of SWP unity with the IC and, if that unity is broken, to advocate its reestablishment. It is also necessary to take this course with great circumspection and with a clear and real affirmation that we are an indigenous wing of the SWP and organizationally loyal and disciplined. Otherwise a break with the IC can well automatically lead to our own exclusion.

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

There is one and only one reason for which the SWP should be able to find grounds for our expulsion: the advocacy within the movement and within those circumstances as expressly laid down by the SWP leadership of our Trotskyist views.

Not only would failure to follow this course be a sectarian gift per se to the SWP tops, but in the next period it could well mean our extinction. To take a clear look at ourselves: we are a nominal 35 or so comrades. About 15 in NYC where there is a certain spread of opinion and orientation among the leading comrades; in addition, a similar number in the Bay Area, but of generally less commitment so that there is as well a spread between the two areas as well as a lack of common orientation within the Bay Area. Then there are a couple of valuable but isolated comrades who are rather passive toward their views, elsewhere.

This nascent grouping is not one which, even if part of it could maneuver the other part into a split against its will, would hold strong promise for the demanding life of an organizationally independent existence. (Correct programme is not by itself enough; the development of cadres counts, too. Trotskyist groupings of our size keep turning up and disappearing in half the countries on earth.) We hold in our hands a body of comrades with great demonstrated qualities of work and seriousness. The chemistry of transforming this into a cadre is not an easy thing. Abortion is.

It is necessary to orient for the best, the optimistic variant before us (what Trotsky called revolutionary optimism). An example along this line would be for the upsurge in the union movement (so long deferred--but note what is happening now in the auto workers) to produce a cleavage in which our party opportunists seek to become the agents for the inevitable 'more progressive wing' of the T.U. bureaucracy, while every other element in the party and possessing an essential militancy orients toward the rank-and-file movement. Then we'll have the reckoning for which the pressures are building and in the most favorable, fullest, clear-cut circumstances.

Immediate tasks: To put ourselves on the correct track we have to open up and act like what we aim to be--a tendency that is a part of the party. One never gets something for nothing. Switching over the mechanism that holds our grouping together from that of an organizational disciplinary sense imposed upon a minimal political agreement to that of a developing political cohesiveness offers threats of losing some comrades along the way. The danger is that we may do it raggedly or fail to fill the new modes of functioning with a real, live, content. But should we go in the other direction and simply quiet down on practically all issues through the means of seeking a vastly intensified discipline, even if the turn aimed at were the one sketched here it would fail because the majority would clearly see and trumpet it about that we were approaching the party in a military fashion. J. P. Cannon is not at all stupid and we would not deceive him by one more tactical product of what he has so frequently stated his hatred--a permanent faction.

This line of conduct is urgent for another reason; we have failed for so long to engage in political discussion and clarification even within the tendency that some comrades fear that beginning to do so now will cause some of those in the NYC tendency to go over to the majority. This fear that we may be in actuality some kind of clique is not only groundless --our comrades here certainly all agree, for example, with the July '61 IC minimal position adopted on Cuba--but this view

only serves to exacerbate real centrifugal forces of other kinds. Rather than conjure up such fears we should seek as much political discussion as we can, and as much of that as we can before and with the movement as a whole rather than within the tendency. Politics and a political identity should be our hall mark rather than clinging to the habits of a vanished role....

The principal threat to a perspective of political struggle with the party is in finding ourselves (1) isolated, (2) discredited, or (3) thrown out through 'violating' party decisions and 'proving' that we are all the usual stuff--anti-party elements, agents of a foreign power (Healy), etc. About (1) isolation, this is in some ways and with some elements inevitable in any case, simply on the basis of the party tops' power and authority and our lack of same. But those whose primary respect is for power are not the best elements for us to approach anyhow. None-the-less the feeling of isolation on our people is a constant strain liable to induce hasty and unstable conduct on our part. It is the isolation of discreditation and the danger of being expelled that we must counter as our principal external task at this time.

...

Summary: All our proposals for the next months must revolve around strengthening ourselves within the party so that we make it as difficult as possible to be dumped out as 'Healyite agents' as the fight in the IC sharpens. This means bringing to the fore the political character of our tendency (and working to clarify and extend it by so doing) and emphasizing our organizational loyalty and discipline to the SWP. This cannot be accomplished by some tactical maneuver, but by a real, if delayed, going over in our functioning to what it should have become earlier.

Should we be squeezed out of the SWP none-the-less we will still be in the strongest position--our comrades and not only those in our tendency vividly aware that we did everything in our power short of surrender of our Bolshevist convictions to remain in our party. But if we approach the situation in this spirit we diminish to the minimum the likelihood of this more pessimistic variant. The party tops will then be in the least advantageous position to move against us organizationally; and we seek political confrontation within the party.

I know this is a long letter, but it's been four months since we've been able to discuss personally and a great deal

has piled up and become urgent in the meantime. I know you don't write much but you should make some response upon due consideration. In addition I'm sending copies of this letter to other comrades to the extent I can get out carbons in a single typing. I hope these proposals elicit a strong response from all who read it, both of consideration and reply and of implementation to the extent feasible in particular circumstances.

There is a whole separate area worthy of another long letter just in going into the politics of our tendency at this juncture and the related tasks--citing and relating the most pressing questions, sketching a line content and suggesting the ways and levels of dealing with them. I'll try to crank something out next weekend.

Certainly much of what I've covered is not as directly applicable to the Bay Area as it is to New York. For example, because your branch is at a great distance from the center and our comrades are a force in it, you are necessarily plunged into struggles in the branch from time to time since many practical decisions are made by the branch itself. But the general tenor is, I believe, applicable to the Bay Area and the other parts of the country. And much of it is intended precisely for strengthening the processes for pulling our tendency more closely together on a nation-wide basis. For this job programmatic agreement is the strongest bond and the one which we must heighten.

With Leninist greetings,

Jim

Appendix 2.

C O P Y

New York
October 7, 1962

Geoffrey White
Berkeley

Dear Geoff:

An enormous amount of urgent matters have accumulated since I returned from the Bay Area. On 9-27 and continued on 9-30 I wrote you an uncompleted letter which I'm appending to this present one. Then I fell sick for a week with influenza and at the same time Wohlforth then openly launched his splitting attack, orally in the NYC tendency meeting, and in writing in his 'Toward the Working Class.'

In order to finish writing you tonight, I want first to make a few basic observations about Comrade Wohlforth's current tack and then conclude with some points for your consideration and action.

1. The proletarian core/working class backbone of the SWP is doubly a straw man in this discussion. First because in the main it is only since Tim's document of this May that he discovered this proletarian core to fuse with. Yet having 'found' it, he also finds that those who know that this core is for some years no longer real are themselves petty bourgeois incipient renegades. The witchhunt and related attrition wiped out all the party's significant working trade union fractions. Left are scattered individuals in factories and pro trade-union oriented fragments in the party, such as the grouping around T. Kerry in the leadership. By no stretch of the imagination are these a party 'backbone' or 'core'--wish fulfillment to the contrary notwithstanding. Secondly, if the party with its centrist program did have an important TU base we'd have to place and/or win over supporters inside the factory fractions and give battle over relevant issues to the line of the party majority as we sought to win ascendancy fraction by fraction. Even in this hypothetical case, the way to proceed is at variance with Tim's line. But to play with the hypothetical case is to blunt the point of the relation between the loss of a working class base and proletarian orientation to the party and the winning out of centrism and degeneration of the core of the party cadre.

2. There is no principled way for Tim to avoid basing his case on the nature of this party. He can and does twist and turn, threaten and bluster, obscure and invent, etc., etc. But if the party is centrist, and it is, the basic line of the Robertson-Ireland document is, as an elementary reflex, correct.

Good Christ, with a pompousness and fraud that border on the mentally aberrant, he writes (to paraphrase since my copy of TW's document has not arrived, and I'm citing from memory the reading of another comrade's copy) that with his line (?) the Minority has in this past year fused with the proletarian core of the party in Detroit, Philly, San Francisco, and is on the way in New Haven! Obviously this is written for foreign consumption. What a 'flattering' way to describe Art and wife and child in Detroit, five longtime party members in Philly and S.F., and a /person/ in New Haven who recently came back to the movement after being out 18 years. The comrades who were won solidly this past year were won to and signed a political document that is our joint 'property' and which was essentially a declaration of support to the IC world resolution.

3. It is painful to try to grapple seriously with Tim's position because it has switched on and off so much. In NYC two months ago we were told by Tim that perspective differences were a fraud for purposes of empty factionalism. (But in May he said they were critical and that every comrade had to stand up and be counted.) Now again they are so paramount that Tim declares he is closer to the 'proletarian core' of the party majority than to his own petty-bourgeois co-thinkers--i.e., the NYC tendency majority. We have consistently declared the party to be centrist in character and have systematically and methodically sought to show the proper tactical and perspective conclusions--while Tim has leaped around from one extreme posture to another. Now he's landed in a very bad position indeed. While he doubtless doesn't now mean all of the reconciliationist line he's preaching toward the Majority, it opens the road back for any of his followers who are uncomfortable with the episodes of struggle which are mandatory when Trotskyists and centrists coexist within one party. To assume even as a tactic a mask of conciliationism risks losing comrades when the disguise fuses with the face.

4. Tim gives every evidence of ardently desiring the Robertson-Ireland wing of the tendency out of the Minority and out of the party, and the sooner the better--as witness his concluding remarks at the last NYC tendency meeting: 'Robertson's covertly for a split within a few months. If Jim goes, good riddance!' And of course there is the 'break all ties, deepen the breach' tone and language of his document. Cannon wrote more mildly of Shachtman in 1940, though Tim obviously believes he and I are the exact reincarnations of those two then. So driven is he to create a panic mood of hate to consummate a split of the tendency that to add to the compound picture of a petty bourgeois grouping of the upper West Side's middle class 103rd St. fleeing the proletarian factory quarters at 101st St. that poor old Tim snarls and foams at any decent comrade daring to call the Shachtmanites of 1941-46 a left-centrist grouping. To cite Tim Wohlforth against Tim Wohlforth, however:

'We can now get an accurate picture of the political development of the Shachtman tendency. It was born in 1940 as a petty bourgeois opposition within the Trotskyist movement. It went through a 'second split' with the mass exodus of those who rode the opposition bloc out of the movement altogether. It then launched a party and attempted to compete with the SWP to be the Trotskyist party in this country. It contained at this time divergent tendencies which pushed it in different directions. It had within it tendencies which wished a reconciliation with the SWP by building a united Trotskyist party. It had other tendencies which forced it to the right-- to a definitive break with Trotskyism in 1946. We can characterize the WP of this period as a left centrist grouping of unstable composition which couldn't quite decide exactly where it was going. Then following the 1946 WP-SWP unity affair and with the opening of the cold-war witch hunt, it began to move to the right at an accelerated pace, transforming itself from a competing tendency within the Trotskyist movement into a centrist 'third camp' tendency which felt itself antagonistic to Trotskyism as well as to reformism. It stayed only for a relatively short time in this centrist limbo as it soon struck out in an openly reformist direction, seeking today to become the loyal left wing of the social-democracy.' (page 22, What Makes Shachtman Run?, Tim Wohlforth, August, 1957.)

The characterizing of the WP is a small matter as it relates to our needs, but it is very big for one thing which is easily obscured by charges and accusations--who is serious toward our history and theory and who has bent and twisted them for petty factional gain and to try to make a wrong line look good.

5. So, my concluding observation is that Tim has entirely lost his head just now and is in a political sense deranged. He has managed to reproduce a set of charges toward some of his own Tendency comrades that are of the same kind as the accusations of the Majority against the Minority as a whole. But Tim is much harsher and more urgently split-orientated than Hansen has managed to be to date.

What I want you to consider and/or act on are the following:

(1) In any sharp flare-up of factionalism harsh tone and characterizations are inevitable, and I've no complaint. However, there are two limits that have been passed which must be reestablished, and I want your help in stamping out transgressions: (a) to combat most urgently accusations in writing which give the party majority a basis for charges against

minority comrades. Tim wrote that Robertson-Ireland deny party discipline; are for breaking party statutes; and want to bring non-party members into intra-party factional meetings. These accusations I state for the record and for reasons of fact are false. You and I discussed and later I carefully singled out and repeated in the NYC tendency meeting my view that the position of our tendency had to be one of abiding by the discipline and statutes of the party. For Tim to continue writing in this vein would be to commit a provocation against our party membership. (b) to create an intolerant attitude toward use of words and phrases which are only justified for creating a split atmosphere, such as 'the remark about 'good riddance.'

(2) While no one can stop Tim from a criminal split in the tendency if he's really hell bent for one, yet intervention by Bay Area comrades can make it difficult to carry off and give the time for clarification and proper discussion (i.e., to let the minimal fact sink in that after 2-3 months Larry and I are still in the party!). For our part, we have and do declare our willingness to function, if we lose, as a responsible minority in the national Tendency, but Tim shows no trace of a similar attitude.

(3) Closely related to the possibility of the Bay Area moderating what has exploded into a threatening situation is where you and other Bay Area comrades stand on the substantive matters of perspective. If the bulk of our Bay Area comrades (who are 40 % of the Tendency) do opt for Tim's line--and he's doing his best to get a frightened stampede going--then that's that, he'll just freeze out the NYC Tendency majority and try to write us off. Likewise if you comrades adopt an 'isolationist' line of a curse on both your houses, Wohlforth will feel free to act, on the assumption that his connections and PC role will bring you around later.

So if you are in basic agreement with out analysis of the party and resulting perspective, you'd better let it be known, soon and in a nice, mild, not anti-Wohlforthian way. This combined approach will cool off Tim more surely than anything else. I could raise the question of an amending process to create a final draft of our document, but I'd rather wait to find out whether you intend to be involved in it.

So that's the way things look from here. Feel free to show this letter to any tendency comrades in the area that you think it worthwhile.

Comradely,

Jim

FOR BLACK TROTSKYISM --

Against the P. C. Draft "Freedom Now"
In Defense of Programmatic Fundamentals
For Building a Black Trotskyist Cadre

by James Robertson and Shirley Stoute

"If it happens that we in the SWP are not able to find the road to this strata [the Negroes], then we are not worthy at all. The permanent revolution and all the rest would be only a lie." (by L. D. Trotsky, quoted in the SWP 1948-50 Negro Resolution.)

I. General Introduction

The Negro Question has been posed before the party for exceptional consideration and with increasing sharpness as the gap has widened over the past ten years between the rising level of Negro struggle and the continuing qualitatively less intense general Trade Union activity.

(1) Basic Theory: National or Race-Color Issue? Breitman vs. Kirk, 1954-57.

To our understanding, what was involved then was a shading of theoretical difference. Breitman saw the Negro people as the embryo of a nation toward whom the right of self-determination was acknowledged but not yet, at least, advocated. Kirk interpreted the Negro question as a race issue which, under conditions of historic catastrophe (e.g., fascism victorious) could be transformed into a national question. Hence he agreed to the support of self-determination should it become a requirement in the Negro struggle but he assumed it could conceivably arise only under vastly altered conditions. Both parties agreed to the inappropriateness of self-determination as a slogan of the party then.

The present writers agree essentially with Kirk's view of the time, in particular with the 1955 presentation, "For the Materialist Conception of the Negro Question" (SWP Discussion Bulletin A-30, August 1955). We concur in noting the absence among the Negro people of those qualities which could create a separate political economy, however embryonic or stunted. This absence explains why the mass thrust for Negro freedom for over a hundred years has been toward smashing the barriers to an egalitarian and all-sided integration. But integration into what kind of social structure? Obviously only into one that can sustain that integration. This is the powerful reciprocal contribution of the Negro struggle to the general class struggle.

It is the most vulgar impressionism to see in Negro moods of isolationist despair over the winning of real points of support from other sections of society today as some kind of process to transform the forms of oppressive segregation into a protective barrier, behind which will occur the gestation of a new nation. Negro Nationalism in ideology and origins is somewhat akin to Zionism as it was from the turn of the century until the Second World War. The large Negro ghettos of the Northern cities are the breeding grounds for this ideology among a layer of petit-bourgeois or declassed elements who vicariously imagine that segregated residential areas can be the germ sources for a new

state in which they will exploit ('give jobs to') Black workers. Hence it is that separatist moods or currents among Negroes have a very different foundation and significance than as a national struggle.

As for the specific issue of self-determination, we find that the 1957 party resolution makes a good and balanced formulation:

'Theoretically the profound growth of national solidarity and national consciousness among the Negro people might under certain future conditions give rise to separatist demands. Since minority people have the democratic right to self-determination, socialists would be obliged to support such demands should they reflect the mass will. Yet even under these circumstances socialists would continue to advocate integration rather than separation as the best solution of the race question for Negro and white workers alike. While upholding the right of self-determination, they would continue to urge an alliance of the Negro people and the working class to bring about a socialist solution of the civil rights problem within the existing national framework.'

(2) From Theoretical Weakness to Current Revisionism.

However, it is of immediate importance to point out that this background dispute is far from the central issue in our criticism of the 1963 Political Committee Draft Resolution, 'Freedom Now: the New Stage in the Struggle for Negro Emancipation and the Tasks of the SWP.' Thus the 1948-50 party resolution, titled 'Negro Liberation Through Revolutionary Socialism,' even though it contains the theoretical outlook that Breitman upheld, is a solidly revolutionary document in its intent and aims. What has happened in the interval is simply that the present party Majority has made the earlier theoretical weakness the point of departure for the profound degradation now arrived at in the 1963 Majority document of the role of the working class in the United States and of its revolutionary Marxist party as well. With evident loss of confidence in a revolutionary perspective by its authors, the essential revision in the 1963 draft is, however qualified, nothing other than the substitution of the axis of struggle as oppressed versus oppressor to replace class versus class.

(3) The 1963 Revisionism.

The essence of what is 'new' is found in the following portions of the 1963 PC draft:

'But here, as in Africa, the liberation of the Negro people requires that the Negroes organize themselves independently, and control their own struggle, and not permit it to be subordinated to any other consideration or interest. (Emphasis added.)

'This means that the Negroes must achieve the maximum unity of their forces--in a strong and disciplined nationwide movement or congress of organizations, and ideological unity based on dividing, exposing and isolating gradualism and other tendencies emanating from their white suppressors. This phase of the process is now beginning.

'Having united their own forces, the independent Negro movement will then probably undertake the tasks of division and alliance. It will seek ways to split the white majority so that the Negro disadvantage of being a numerical minority can be compensated for by division and conflict on the other side.' (Emphasis added.)

and

'The general alliance between the labor movement and the Negro fighters for liberation can be prepared for and preceded by the cementing of firm working unity between the vanguard of the Negro struggle and the socialist vanguard of the working class represented by the Socialist Workers Party.'

The lesser sin of this schema of the future for the Negro struggle is the complete capitulation to Negro nationalism. (For one to see this vividly, re-read the quotations above substituting, say, 'Algerian' for 'Negro' and 'French' for 'whites'.) It is serious enough that the draft envisions no effort to compete with the Black nationalists' understandable reaction to liberal-pacifist toadying. Certainly it is the duty of Marxists to struggle to separate militant elements from a regressive ideology. To say that the Negro struggle must not be subordinated to any other consideration is to deny proletarian internationalism. Every struggle, without exception, acquires progressive significance only in that it furthers directly or indirectly the socialist revolution internationally. Any struggle other than the workers' class struggle itself has, at best, indirect value. Lenin and the Russian Bolsheviks were obligated to wage a two-front ideological dispute in order to free the revolutionary vanguard from misconceptions on this score--against the petit-bourgeois nationalist socialists who saw the national struggle as having a progressive historical significance in its own right; and against the sectarian view of Rosa Luxemburg and the workers' party in Poland which, from the correct premise that the nation-state had become

reactionary in the modern world drew the over-simplified and erroneous conclusion--'against self-determination (for Poland).' Lenin pointed out that independent working class involvement in the struggle for national self-determination in several important ways furthered the class struggle and thereby acquired justification. Similarly Trotsky pointed out that defense of the Soviet Union was subordinate to and a part of the proletarian revolution internationally and that in the event of a clash of interests the particular lesser interests of the part (and a degenerate part at that) would for revolutionists take second place.

It is worthy of note that the Negro struggle in America is more directly related to the class struggle than any essentially national question could be--for the Negro struggle for freedom is a fight by a working class color caste which is the most exploited layer in this country. Hence any steps forward in this struggle immediately pose the class question and the need for class struggle in sharpest form.

The graver consequence of the proposed Majority draft is its necessary corollary that the Majority would see the revolutionary workers' party excluded from one more area of struggle. In their 1961 Cuban question documents the Majority made it clear that for them the Cuban Revolution and, by implication, in the Colonial Revolution as well, the revolutionary working class party is, prior to the revolution, a dispensable convenience. This view has now been explicitly generalized and confirmed by the Majority, as in Section 13 of their 'For Early Reunification of the World Trotskyist Movement':

'13. Along the road of a revolution beginning with simple democratic demands and ending in the rupture of capitalist property relations, guerilla warfare conducted by landless peasant and semi-proletarian forces, under a leadership that becomes committed to carrying the revolution through to a conclusion, can play a decisive role in undermining and precipitating the downfall of a colonial or semi-colonial power. This is one of the main lessons to be drawn from experience since the Second World War. It must be consciously incorporated into the strategy of building revolutionary Marxist parties in colonial countries.'

By their extension of this line to include the Negro question in the U.S., the SWP Majority has made the most serious overt denial yet of a revolutionary perspective. What they have done is to a priori exclude themselves from struggling for the leadership of a most crucial section of the American working class, and instead to consign that struggle to a hypothetical parallel united Negro Peoples' Organization which would 'probably' one day work with the socialist working class

leadership in the U.S. In essence the erroneous conclusions drawn by the Majority from the Cuban Revolution will now be incorporated into the party's American perspective in the form of 'waiting for a Black Castro.' Thus the party's supreme responsibility, the American revolution, is being vitiated!

II. To the Socialist Revolution--The Broad Tasks

(1) Method of Objectivism versus Analytical Approach.

In surveying current developments the descriptive articles and reports of Breitman have been valuable (for example, his 'New Trends and New Moods in the Negro Struggle,' SWP Discussion Bulletin, Summer 1961). However, the material is flawed and limited by its shaping and presentation through an approach which is 'objective,' 'sociological,' 'descriptive.' This stands in contrast to the indicated analytical approach for Marxists. Underlying this difference in method of treatment is the closely correlated difference between viewing the developments as an external observer--now given formal codification in the PC draft resolution--as against conceiving developments from the standpoint of involvement in their fundamental solution. For the Negro struggle to this solution integrally involves the revolutionary Marxist party which is missing in Breitman's approach to current events.

(2) Our Point of Departure--The Socialist Revolution.

Our point of departure comes in turn as the conclusion that the Negro question is so deeply built into the American capitalist class-structure--regionally and nationally--that only the destruction of existing class relations and the change in class dominance--the passing of power into the hands of the working class--will suffice to strike at the heart of racism and bring about a solution both real and durable. Our approach to present struggles cannot be 'objective.' Rather it rests on nothing other than or less than the criteria of what promotes or opposes the socialist revolution.

Therefore we can find an amply sufficient point of departure in a key statement of the 1948-50 resolution:

'The primary and ultimate necessity of the Negro movement is its unification with the revolutionary forces under the leadership of the proletariat. The guiding forces of this unification can only be the revolutionary party.'

(3) Negro Mass Organizations and the Revolutionary Party.

It would be fool-hardy and presumptuous to seek after any pat schema detailing the road to be travelled in going from today's struggles to our ultimate goals. But there are certain qualities and elements which, as in all such social struggles, do and will manifest themselves along the way.

One such matter is that of the basic approach to organizations of Negro workers and youth. The generality is that in an American society in which large sections of the working people are saturated with race hatreds and intolerance of the particular needs of other parts and strata, special organizations are mandatory for various strata. This consideration finds its sharpest expression in the Negro struggle. Today in the wake of the upsurge in mass civil rights struggles there is a felt and urgent need for a broad mass organization of Negro struggle free of the limitations, weaknesses, hesitations, and sometimes downright betrayal which afflict the currently existing major competitors. This need will be with us for a long time. Participation in the work of building such a movement is a major responsibility for the revolutionary party. Very likely along the way a complex and shifting combination of work in already existing groups and the building of new organizations will be involved. But as long as we know what we are aiming for we can be oriented amidst the complexities and vicissitudes of the process.

At bottom what the Marxists should advocate and aim to bring about is a transitional organization of the Negro struggle standing as a connecting link between the party and the broader masses. What is involved in working from a revolutionary standpoint is to seek neither a substitute to nor an opponent of the vanguard party, but rather a unified formation of the largely or exclusively Negro members of the party together with the largest number of other militants willing to fight for that section of the revolutionary Marxist program dealing with the Negro question. Such a movement expresses simultaneously the special needs of the Negro struggle and its relationship to broader struggles--ultimately for workers' power.

This approach to the special oppression of the Negroes stems from the tactics of Lenin's and Trotsky's Comintern. It was there that the whole concept was worked out for relating the party to mass organizations of special strata under conditions where the need had become evident and it becomes important that such movements contribute to the proletarian class struggle and that their best elements be won over to the party itself. The militant womens' organizations, revolutionary youth leagues, and radical Trade Unionists' associations are other examples of this form.

Parenthetically, it should be noted how little there is in common between this outlook and that of the 1963 PC draft. Thus even in the hypothetical case that a separate social and material base was somehow created sufficient to generate a mass Negro national consciousness, the Bolshevik response is not just to back away and talk of facilitating eventual common work between a 'them' of that nationality and an 'us' of the (white) socialist vanguard of the (white) working class. Even if a new state--a separate Black Republic--were created, our Negro comrades, even at this greatest conceivable remove, would become nothing other than a new section of a politically common international party--the Fourth International. And their struggle for socialism would continue to be our cause too.

(4) Toward a Black Trotskyist Cadre.

To return to the realities of the Negro struggle as it is and to the SWP as it is, there is one vital element without which the basic working program remains a piece of paper as far as actual involvement in the struggle is concerned. That element is an existing section, however modest, of Negro party members functioning actively and politically in the movement for Negro freedom.

Viewed from this aspect the current PC draft is at once a rationalization and an accomodation to the weakness of our party Negro forces, and, moreover, will exacerbate this weakness. This organizational abstentionism is obtrusive in the draft's direct implication that it doesn't really matter about the SWP because the Negro movement can get along well enough without the revolutionary working class party and one day the Negro vanguard may turn in our direction anyway. The key paragraph of the PC draft quoted in this article sums up a permeating thread of the entire resolution, places the party's role as one of fraternal relationship between two parallel structures: the (white) working class and its vanguard on the one side, and the Negro people and their vanguard on the other. This conception denies the fundamental necessity that the party will lead, must lead, or should even try to lead the decisive section of the working class in America. The resolution gives credence to the concept that 'we cannot lead the Negro people.' This is absolutely contradictory to a revolutionary perspective. Our leadership means the revolutionary class struggle program carried out by revolutionists in the mass movements, fused into the revolutionary party. Just as trade unionists will not join the revolutionary party if they do not see it as essential to winning the struggle, so Negro fighters for liberation will not join the party on any basis other than that the only road to freedom for them is the revolutionary socialist path of struggle through the combat army. Negro militants will not see any

advantage in joining a party which says in effect: 'We cannot lead the Negro people. We are the socialist vanguard of the white working class, and we think it is nice to have fraternal relations with your vanguard (that of the liberation movement).'

Likewise, once we have recruited Negro militants to the party, the line expressed in the PC draft serves not to help them to develop as Trotskyist cadre and to recruit other black workers on the basis of our program, but rather would serve to waste and mislead them. When the party denies its role of leadership of the black masses, then for what reason do we need a black Trotskyist cadre? The logic of this position means that there is no role for a Negro as a party member that differs from that he could play without entering the party, or, as in the case of the position taken on southern work, membership in the party would actually isolate him from important areas of work because 'the party is not needed there.'

Some comrades, in response to the criticisms made here, will say that the party is not giving up a revolutionary perspective, but is only being realistic and facing the fact that the majority of our membership is white and that we have only a tiny and weak Negro cadre. We must seek to become in reality what we are in theory, rather than the reverse--i.e., adapting our program to a serious weakness in composition. If we take this road of adaptation the party program in a process of gross degeneration will become based on a privileged section of the working class.

Negroes who are activists in the movement, such as, for example, the full-time militants around SNCC, are every day formulating concepts of struggle for the movement. The meaning of the line of the PC Draft is that we are not interested in recruiting these people to our white party because we have the revolutionary socialist program for the section of the working class of which we are the vanguard, and they (Negro militants) must lead their own struggle, although we would like to have fraternal relations with them. This is the meaning of the PC draft.

To the concept of the white party must be counterposed the concept of the revolutionary party. For if we are only the former, then black workers are misplaced in the SWP. There are three main elements which we recruit to the party: minority workers, white workers, and intellectuals. In the process of the work which brings these elements to the party there are special considerations which must be made with reference to the suspicions of minority peoples ('white caution') in regard to personnel, etc. However, once inside the party we are all only revolutionists. All of these elements are

fused in the struggle to achieve the revolutionary program into revolutionists who as a whole make up the revolutionary party. Thus the 'white caution' in Negro organizations is wrong inside the party. An internal policy of 'white caution' equals paternalism, patronization, creation of 'party Negroes', etc., and has no place in a Bolshevnik party.

The statement by Trotsky, quoted at the head of this article, that if the SWP cannot find the road to the Negroes then it is not worthy at all, finds its concurrent counterpart in the choice now before us. Either the revolutionary perspective in the U.S. has become blunted and lifeless or else its expression today as a living aim of the party pivots, in the context of relative working class passivity and active Negro struggle, upon the development of a black Trotskyist cadre.

The principal aim of this article is to show that this deficiency in forces is not the fault of objective conditions--isolation and the like--but is rooted in the complex of related political and organizational faults stemming from a loss of confidence and orientation toward the proletarian revolution by the SWP Majority.

Because of the pressures of other work upon the authors, the last two sections of this article have not been completed in time for the bulletin deadline even in the rough form of the first sections. The sections which it had been hoped to include are:

III. The Party

- (1) External and inner party aspects of winning and building a Negro cadre.
- (2) Against 'ours is a white party' and against patronization.
- (3) Qualitative difference of required approach inside and outside the party.
- (4) Priorities in Negro work--defining the most recruitable layers by the party.

IV. Mass Work Today

- (1) Essential and common flaw in agitation based on either 'Federal Troops to the South!' or 'Kennedy--Deputize and Arm Birmingham Negroes!'

- (2) Against Union decertification hearings as a way to fight Jim Crow; for mass picketing to break racial exclusion in unions.
- (3) Specific aims and balance of our work--North and South.
- (4) Appraisal of existing organizations, including SNCC, the Muslims, etc.

In lieu of these developed sections, we are concluding with a few fragmentary notes. It is our hope that the coming party Convention will act to continue a literary discussion following the Convention in the fast changing Negro Question. In addition, for a brief statement of views on mass work, attention is directed to the Minority Tendency's amendment to the PC draft on the American Question (in Discussion Bulletin Vol. 24, No. 23, June 1963).7

1. The Black Muslims are, with many contradictions, primarily a religious organization. Their political activity is primarily limited to the propaganda sphere. They do not have a program for struggle to meet the demands of the black masses in the community today, although their promise of political candidates would represent somewhat of a turn. We take exception to comrade Kirk's statement that, 'The foundation of the Muslim movement is basically a reflex of the lumpen proletariat to gradualism, to the betrayal of the intellectuals and the default of the union movement.' The Muslim movement has a petit-bourgeois program--black business, black economy, separate on this basis, for this goal, is the answer to the oppression. Their internal organization is bureaucratically structured, with heavy financial drainage on the rank-and-file membership to the enrichment of 'The Messenger.' On the other hand, while they call to all levels of black society, businessmen, workers, even socialists and communists, as long as they're black, in reality the appeal is attractive mainly to the working class and especially to the lumpen layers, but they are no longer lumpen when they join the movement. One tendency of the leadership represented by Malcolm X condemns American capitalist society and shows favor toward Cuba and Red China as opposed to Chiang Kai-Shek. Another tendency claims that international affairs don't concern them and the black man's problems in America have no relation to the Cuban Revolution, etc. It is realistic to expect that we may be able to win some of its periphery and membership to the revolutionary program, but because of the religious, non-action oriented, exacting and bureaucratic nature of the organization, this can best be done through discussion and common action where possible, rather than on the inside.

2. R. Vernon as prosecuting attorney of 'The White-Radical Left on Trial.'

In his article comrade Vernon states: 'The absurdity of a Militant talking trade unions and Negro-White unity at the same time that it sounds like the very voice of the depths of the Negro ghetto is offered with a straight face.' This is but one blatant indication that comrade Vernon is not making criticism from the point of view of a revolutionary and does not see the struggle for socialism--the class struggle--as having any essential connection to the Negro struggle for equality. Vernon's current writings, 'Why White Radicals are Incapable of Understanding Black Nationalism' and 'The White Radical Left on Trial,' are based on the premise, or attempt to prove, that Marxism and revolutionary socialism have no place in the struggle of the most exploited section of the American working class nor in the colonial revolution either. For Vernon the building of a revolutionary party aiming toward the American revolution is at best irrelevant and international working class solidarity meaningless. In short, there is little in comrade Vernon's articles that is common to Marxism. Furthermore, his views are saturated with the spirit of the treacherous justification 'that ours is a white socialist revolutionary party'--the logic of which is liquidationist.

Lest any comrades think we are too harsh in criticizing Vernon as having theoretically surrendered to black nationalism and rejected Marxism (with or without quote marks), let them ponder such a remark as, 'The problem of revolutionary nationalism has never been dealt with adequately in any Marxist or 'Marxist' movement anywhere. Lenin only scratched the surface...' Of the entire, penetrating, historically verified theory of the Permanent Revolution, Vernon says not a word! Yet, above all, Trotsky's theory tackles 'the problem of revolutionary nationalism' and lays bare its solution.

Moreover, even if 'Lenin only scratched the surface,' our luck has finally turned. Vernon coolly informs us that the SWP has now proved its unique worth: 'It is the only group whose internal life can, and did, produce the WWR /'Why White Radicals...' document...' Apparently Vernon, the author of WWR, has capitulated to his own ego even more fully than to nationalism!

We are happy to accept comrade Vernon's finding that the Tendency we support is the most distant from his views of any in the party.

July 3, 1963