

I N T E R N A L I N F O R M A T I O N B U L L E T I N

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	Page
1. International Report, by Joseph Hansen	1
2. Political Report, by Farrell Dobbs	18

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Report on International Developments

by

Joseph Hansen

Since our last plenum, not much has changed in the international movement. In general it has held its own despite difficulties; and in some places it has made encouraging gains. Rather than go into the various situations on the basis of information that is not detailed, it will probably be more productive to center the discussion on some of the political problems which the movement faces and which require special attention and collective thinking.

In the past couple of years we have been faced with some turns in the international scene of considerable complexity. On the political level our course is in general clearly indicated. However, certain developments involve deeper problems and there may be some nuances of opinion as to their ultimate meaning. These include such things as the succession of defeats that have set back the colonial revolution, of which spectacular instances were the defeat in Brazil in 1964 and the defeat in Indonesia in 1965. To this is to be added Johnson's escalation of the war in Vietnam, and the continued failure of Moscow and Peking to reply to it with effective countermeasures. Finally, there is the crisis in China, and so-called "cultural revolution."

The problem is to put these events into proper focus, to analyze them, determine their interrelationship and what they point to; and finally to arrive at a common attitude toward them that is in conformity with the basic principles of our movement.

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The first big question that faces us is the following: Is the world situation right now as favorable to the revolutionary movement as it was in 1959-62; that is, at the time of the victory of the Cuban and Algerian Revolutions?

I think that a certain recession, or a marking of time, in the colonial revolution has occurred; and that it would be a mistake not to recognize it.

In Latin America the officer caste, representing the oligarchies and U.S. imperialism, has seized power in a series of countries, the latest one being Argentina. The worst defeat was the one in Brazil, inasmuch as this country is decisive in Latin America due to the size of its population, its economic development and its strategic location. The crushing of the uprising in the Dominican Republic was another serious blow. The guerrilla struggles in Guatemala, Venezuela, Colombia, and Peru, while registering some successes have also suffered bad defeats and in general are finding it difficult to get beyond the stage of holding their own.

One of the main results of this has been an increasing isolation of the Cuban revolution from the continent despite the efforts of its leaders to break out by inspiring others to follow the Cuban example.

In Africa sharp setbacks have occurred. At the head of the list stand the Congo, Algeria and Ghana. At the moment the situation in Nigeria is deteriorating; and elsewhere the various guerrilla movements face difficulties like those confronting the guerrillas in Latin America, although the Mozambique Liberation Front claims to have succeeded in establishing a focal center.

In Asia, two bitter defeats occurred -- one in Ceylon and the other in Indonesia. The latter defeat paved the way for one of the bloodiest purges in history.

On the same side of the ledger must be placed the evolution of the Sino-Soviet conflict to the point of an open clash on the government level and a virtual break in normal relations -- a clash of the most serious consequences to the defense of the Vietnamese revolution and to the defense of all the workers states, above all, China.

Finally, the size and gravity of the crisis in China has had a further deleterious effect which I will consider a little later.

Another phenomenon obviously related to all this is the speed and violence with which American imperialism is prepared to intervene in the internal affairs of other countries as has been demonstrated in the Congo, the Dominican Republic and Vietnam; and its mounting belligerency as shown particularly in relation to China.

As Marxists we are duty bound to examine the causes and effects of these developments and to draw the correct lessons, particularly as they concern the course and perspectives of the world revolution in the coming period.

First of all, it must be stressed that the basic relationship of forces between world imperialism on the one hand and the world revolution on the other -- and the world revolution includes the workers states and all the elements of the international class struggle tending toward socialism -- this basic relationship of forces has not been altered.

The main contradictions of capitalism have not been eliminated; the gap between the industrially backward countries and the imperialist powers that exploit them -- which is the prime generator of the colonial revolution -- continues to grow ever wider; the powerful position of the workers states remains intact; the masses throughout the colonial world remain anticapitalist and anti-imperialist in their outlook and pro-Soviet,

pro-Chinese or pro-Cuban in their sympathies. The masses throughout the colonial areas are convinced of the capacity of planned economies, such as exist in the workers states, to bring swift progress.

These factors are at the bottom of the amazing speed displayed in recent years by one people after another in resuming their struggle for freedom after defeats. These factors make it possible for new upsurges and fresh outbreaks to occur much sooner than was the case in the twenties or thirties following setbacks.

Thus, if the net effect of the series of checks to the colonial revolution signify a relative strengthening of the imperialist counterrevolution, the emphasis must be placed on the qualifying word, "relative." Imperialism, despite its recent successes cannot possibly hold back the revolutionary tide for long. In fact its position is so precarious, as its strategists well understand, that one more victorious socialist revolution, one more Cuba anywhere in the world, could definitively end all hope in Wall Street of containing the colonial revolution by brute military force.

The loss of a single battle means loss of the war they are waging on a world scale against revolution. This is one of the reasons for the note of frenzy, of desperation in their foreign policy, which strikes even sectors of the American bourgeoisie as not being entirely rational.

But if we were to leave it at that, simply stressing the partial and highly relative nature of the successes scored by imperialism against the colonial revolution and emphasizing that nothing basic has changed we could make some serious errors.

First, we would tend to overlook or not give sufficient attention to the causes of the defeats. Failure to evaluate these causes with all due consideration could in turn lead to still further defeats and in any case make it far more difficult to find the correct way to help turn things and to achieve a new success at the earliest possible moment.

Second, we would tend to overlook the effects of the defeats, particularly the potential ones. It is well to recall in this respect how a series of defeats of the revolution paved the way for World War II although the relation of forces between world imperialism and the USSR remained basically unaltered, as the Axis powers, particularly Germany, discovered to their cost. There are many differences between the world situation of today and the world situation on the eve of World War II; but the similarities demand attention, especially the similarity between the civil war in Spain and the civil war in Vietnam, the intervention of imperialist powers in both instances, and the miserable role played by the Kremlin.

The Trotskyist movement has already provided valuable material on the causes of the setbacks. On Indonesia, for instance, besides articles by well-known Trotskyists and authoritative declarations by leading bodies, an excellent article by an Indonesian Communist youth recently appeared. The other setbacks have also been dealt with to one degree or another. What is required now is an extension of this work. It is encouraging to note that the problem is attracting the attention of other currents. Recently, for instance, a good study on the defeat in Ghana was published by Monthly Review. It is now available as a small book, Ghana: End of an Illusion.

The causes of the defeats, insofar as they relate to the question of revolutionary leadership, have mainly been due to opportunism. In a case like Ghana, Nkrumah's opportunism was of the most flagrant kind, involving open collusion with the foreign imperialists. In other areas it has often been more masked.

Both the Kremlin and Peking operated in Indonesia under cover of "peaceful coexistence." The heaviest responsibility there falls on the Mao regime which had close relations with the Aidit leadership of the Communist party. Mao covered up the opportunism of Aidit and his support of the bourgeoisie headed by Sukarno; and, if anything, deliberately cultivated and supported Aidit's opportunism. The Maoists speak a very revolutionary language at times but in the case of Indonesia, as in other instances, this language proved to be a left cover for opportunism that led straight to a tragic defeat reminiscent of the one in Germany in Stalin's time.

In Latin America, which is of special interest to us, the main responsibility for the opportunism that paved the way for the big defeat in Brazil in April 1964 can be charged to the Communist party which assiduously practiced a policy of "peaceful coexistence" since the thirties. Even after the lesson provided by the Cuban Revolution, Luis Carlos Prestes, who could have taken power after World War II, was still advancing the line of "peaceful coexistence" up to the very end. The Social Democrats also bear a share of the guilt; their policy, too, was one of almost complete adaptation to the national bourgeoisie.

Besides Brazil, this heavy heritage of Stalinism has had a baneful influence in a number of other countries from Mexico on down.

I will return to some other aspects of the problem in Latin America in a moment.

Besides opportunism, ultraleftism -- the mirror image of opportunism -- has played a very injurious role in some areas. The most glaring instance, of course, is the Maoist rejection of a united front in defense of the Vietnamese revolution. But

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Maoist ultraleftism has also proved to be a weakening element in areas like Latin America. The Maoists with their extreme factionalism have diverted attention from the main issues; and they complicated things for the Cubans, particularly in the problem of relations with the regime of Khrushchev and his heirs. Not the least of the damage done by the Maoists is the unfavorable image they create of revolutionary China among the vanguard and the needless difficulties they place in the way of solving the problem of leadership.

One of the great gains in Latin America resulting from the Cuban revolution was the blow it dealt to the prestige of the old-line Communist parties that had been nurtured in the tradition of Stalinism and its practice of class collaboration under the banner of "peaceful coexistence." In the ferment that followed the Cuban revolution, these ossified parties disintegrated in many areas or lost their monopolistic position in the radical vanguard.

A great shift to the left occurred and a number of new currents arose. The most prominent of these was the one which hoped to emulate the Cuban revolution but which in many areas made an altogether mechanical application of the lessons of that revolution. This current seeks to center everything, or virtually everything, around guerrilla war.

The Trotskyist movement has recognized the positive role played by guerrilla war as a revolutionary technique. Some of the Trotskyists, particularly in Latin America, have given it a good deal of thought deriving from the experiences in their own countries; but as yet the Trotskyist movement as a whole has not gone deeply into the question. I think it is time that the role of guerrilla war, or at least the way it has been practiced in some areas, should be considered more closely.

Here I can give only a few indications.

The first is that in practice there has been a rather strong tendency in certain areas to consider guerrilla war as a panacea. Everything is staked on this one form of struggle as if it could solve all problems.

Second, there is an equally strong tendency to center everything on the peasantry. The key role that can be played by the workers in a revolution is overlooked or disregarded by some of the leaders in this form of struggle. Perhaps they are unaware of the potentialities lodged in the working class.

The causes for this lie in the conservative role often played by a thin layer of skilled workers in the industrially

underdeveloped countries, and the conservative and even reactionary role played for so many decades by the trade-union bureaucracies and by the Social Democratic and Communist parties. All this appears as a conservatism of the working class itself -- as contrasted to the peasantry, which, since it is virtually unorganized, appears fresh and much more ready to struggle.

Third, there is a tendency to substitute geographical concepts for class-struggle concepts. The construction of a "foco," an area controlled by guerrillas, gets put above the need for a firm base among the workers. Dual power becomes equated to dual capitals rather than two centers of polarization in the class struggle.

Fourth, the correct idea that revolutionaries can play a key role in assuring the victory of a revolution at a certain point becomes converted into the idea that a revolution can be inspired by a sufficiently audacious leadership. In other words, what occurs is a reversion to the very old concept of "galvanizing" the masses by spectacular, heroic actions undertaken by a small group in isolation from the masses.

Fifth, the need for carefully studying mass moods and gearing into them with appropriate partial or transitional slogans is disregarded. In some instances, guerrilla fighters have even isolated themselves from the masses in developing armed struggle. The question of phasing the armed struggle and viewing it in relation to the major question of organizing the class is not even considered among some of these revolutionists.

Sixth, the heavy stress on action, which is one of the most positive features of the Cuban example, is often interpreted by guerrilla fighters to mean that theory is relatively unimportant. The result is that some of the guerrilla movements have not advanced clear programs and have evaded taking a principled stand on the need for socialist revolution. For instance in Peru, the movement headed by Luis de la Puente was very ambiguous in stating its aims. This must be noted despite the heroism of this movement and the determination with which these leaders initiated guerrilla action.

This point is especially important, inasmuch as the question of socialist revolution in Latin America has been made an issue by such old-line Stalinist hacks as Blas Roca in their efforts to put the revolutionary movement in tow behind the national bourgeoisie under the flag of "peaceful coexistence."

In short, some of the main lessons of the Russian revolution and the example it set do not appear to have been absorbed by some of the guerrilla leaders. They have not yet understood what revolutionary power lies in the hands of the working class and what force resides in the masses of a city when they take the lead in a revolution.

This depreciation of the revolutionary potential of the workers is partly due to the empiricism of the revolutionary currents that have developed under the influence of the Cuban revolution. In striking out on what they believe are new paths, they are strongly attracted by the successes registered in China and Cuba where guerrilla war played a considerable role. Lacking a body of revolutionary theory against which to measure these achievements, they fail to see how guerrilla war can become converted into a panacea.

All this will change rapidly enough with the first new experience of a modern city in political and social explosion. An intimation of what can occur was provided by the uprising in Santo Domingo. Unfortunately that experience was cut short due to the absence of a revolutionary socialist party and the speed with which Washington moved.

Failure to study the example of the Russian revolution and to apply the lessons of this model has played a big part in unduly magnifying the possibilities of guerrilla war as an exclusive means of struggle. One of the unfortunate end results can be to discredit the positive role that guerrilla war can play in certain countries in a revolutionary situation.

The key for the future still remains the construction of a revolutionary party capable of working out means that genuinely correspond to objective necessities in carrying the class struggle forward. In some countries this means including and even placing considerable reliance on guerrilla war. But it also means that guerrilla war is considered as one tactic among others and not a royal road to success to be taken regardless of time and circumstances.

When we come to the way the masses have been affected by the setbacks it is necessary, of course, to be completely concrete. Facts studied in the light of revolutionary experience and Marxist theory are required for accurate determination of mass moods and attitudes and changes in them. Such information, which is absolutely essential as a guide to action, can be provided only by the revolutionists in each country who are actively engaged in the class struggle in one way or another.

This information is not easily come by and I must admit that I have seen little along these lines in the world Trotskyist press. The tendency -- and this is quite understandable, of course -- is to feature dramatic struggles and articles dealing with the long-range trends. These make good morale boosters.

Also in many areas our movement remains somewhat isolated and is primarily concerned with winning cadres who are interested above all in material dealing with the deep, long-range view and with gaining a correct orientation in the sweep of the world revolution in the past century and especially since 1917.

Certain generalities can be noted, however. In Indonesia, it seems absolutely clear that the masses are in a stunned condition. For the moment, the question of elemental survival on a more or less individual basis is foremost.

In Brazil, the masses likewise have not recovered from the 1964 debacle although the first straws in the wind have appeared in some heroic demonstrations mounted by students.

Generally in Latin America, it appears that the masses have become considerably more cautious since the stormy days following the victory of the Cuban revolution.

Even where forces impelling the masses toward action are great as in countries suffering from unremitting inflation, it takes time for the masses to recover from a serious defeat and to resume their struggle on a broad scale and particularly to bring forward a new leadership.

Ceylon, where we know the situation quite well, furnishes us with a good example of this. The defeat that occurred when the Perera leadership betrayed the principles of revolutionary Marxism and entered into a coalition government that was subsequently ousted has not yet been overcome.

There are many other examples that could be cited.

The main beneficiary in the temporary setbacks to the colonial revolution has been American imperialism. Its successes have greatly emboldened the Pentagon, the CIA, the State Department and the White House. In fact, one can get the impression that these passing gains have gone to their heads.

They are now operating with such arrogance and disregard for public opinion as to even give the appearance that a qualitative change has occurred in American policy -- that somehow they have discovered some new secrets and formulas giving more power to their counterrevolutionary activities. Actually this is not so. They are continuing to do what they did in Greece at the end of World War II, in Korea in 1950, in Iran in 1953, in Guatemala in 1954, in Lebanon in 1958, and in Cuba at the Bay of Pigs in 1961, to cite some of the highlights.

The practical application of American counterrevolutionary policy has been determined by the resistance to be felt in revolutionary mass movements abroad and popular opposition at home. When they meet sizable resistance, they postpone, delay

and even retreat as in Korea. A dip in the colonial revolution, on the other hand, registers as a rise in Washington's counter-revolutionary chart which is read as indicating the possibility of moving ahead with their reactionary schemes and plots and wars.

The calculations of Washington's strategists in the recent period are clear enough.

In the absence of an immediate revolutionary threat in the western hemisphere -- the main base of their empire -- with this half of the world fairly well contained under lock and key, they feel that they can advance in the other half of the world without running into undue danger.

The conflict between Moscow and Peking appears to offer an enticing opening since the two major capitals in the camp of the workers states seem incapable of closing ranks against the foe. Moscow's line, in fact, even offers Washington a free hand as has been rather dramatically illustrated by the confidence with which the Pentagon has withdrawn troops from Europe for use in Vietnam.

The Johnson administration has felt encouraged to follow up the openings in view of the considerable successes that have been achieved and the flabbiness of the Soviet and Chinese responses.

That this policy risks a third world war is quite clear; but Johnson's strategists undoubtedly count on being able to draw back before the point of no return is reached. A possible miscalculation is dismissed under the general formula of "brinkmanship" or taking a "calculated risk."

Thus they have proceeded with their escalation in Southeast Asia, probing the ground as they moved forward. There have been indications that they themselves have felt surprised at the lack of any effective countermeasures from either Moscow or Peking that would clearly intimate they have come dangerously close to the point of showdown.

Consequently it can be expected that Johnson will continue his course in Southeast Asia until he finally goads either Peking or Moscow or both of them into taking some really jarring countermeasures. The great danger is that by then Washington will be so deeply committed that its strategists will feel no choice is open but to plunge in still deeper.

This is the international background against which the crisis in China must be placed.

* * *

One of the major difficulties in analyzing the deep crisis that has hit the Mao regime is lack of data, or data that is twisted and distorted either by Peking's information services or by the many opponents of the regime and the Chinese revolution, ranging from the Khrushchevists to the CIA.

An essential task is thus to assemble data -- and not just from the official handouts of the Hsinhua News Agency or the Peking Review. This task is not at all an easy one.

In determining the economic and social forces at play in China, for instance, no statistics are available. According to Mao's thought, the class struggle can be counted on to continue for perhaps centuries after the overthrow of capitalism, but it is a struggle in which Mao's thought appears to require that it be conducted blindfolded, not to mention the gag on free discussion. What is the size of the working class and the peasantry? What differentiations have appeared in these classes? How have they changed during the years? In what direction are they changing and at what rate? What about the bureaucracy? What is its size? What differentiations are appearing in it? What share of the national income does it absorb? To what extent is it fostering special privileges?

On all these questions and dozens like them, the Mao regime maintains silence. This alone is sufficient to raise the question, what are they trying to hide? And what does the mere possibility of such a question indicate about the nature of the regime? We recall very well that one of the hallmarks of the bureaucratic caste in the Soviet Union has always been the discreet curtain behind which it hides all statistics that might provide information about the caste and its privileges.

Our movement should be the last to permit itself to become dazzled by the darkness in this area or to be turned aside by the official secrecy. To best defend China against imperialism, it is necessary to know what is going on behind the facade of Mao's benign portrait.

One thing is absolutely certain; the official secrecy is no evidence of democracy. Socialism above all requires free access to statistical information. It is one of the prime democratic rights of the proletariat.

Similarly in the debates over policies that have plunged the regime into a deep political crisis from which it has not yet emerged, the struggle is occurring in a locked room. The only information given out concerning the issues and the disputants is filtered and processed and handed out in cryptic reports by one side only and generally in the form of highly tendentious attacks.

Again, this speaks volumes about the absence of proletarian democracy in China and the Stalinist-type procedures of the

Mao regime. Such procedures have nothing in common with socialism. They are highly damaging to the defense of China and to the cause of socialism in general.

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If we are to seek the major causes of the current crisis in China, there is little doubt that on the international side they flow from the succession of defeats of the colonial revolution in the recent period, above all the defeat in Indonesia, and the mounting danger of a U.S. attack. The timing alone tells us that.

The setback in Indonesia was devastating testimony as to the bankruptcy of Mao's foreign policy and the wide gulf separating it from a Leninist policy. Coupled with an ultraleft sectarianism that compelled even the Cubans to take their distance, Mao's policy ended by isolating China even in the camp of the workers states and among the Communist parties. The Albanians themselves have displayed a certain uneasiness over such consequences of Mao's line.

The disastrous results of Mao's foreign policy could not help but be of great concern even to sectors of the bureaucracy; since the threat of American imperialist aggression also puts the special interests of the bureaucracy in China at stake. Pressure undoubtedly mounted within the bureaucracy for a change to a course offering more positive results.

At the same time it is not difficult to deduce that these criticisms reinforced Mao's need to cover up the consequences of his policy and to compensate for the defeats by spectacular diversions that might advantageously be combined with smothering critical voices whether they emanated from those favoring bureaucratic privileges or those opposed to them.

The "cultural revolution"; the purges; the instigation of the "Red Guard" movement; the stepped up propaganda concerning Moscow's "revisionism," which offers a convenient scapegoat for Mao's own "revisionism," fit in perfectly with this. Through bureaucratic means Mao is seeking to shore up China's defenses.

In coming to these conclusions we in the United States must be especially sensitive to one element in this entire crisis -- that is, the growing threat of an attack on China mounted by American imperialism. The apprehensions of the Mao regime about this are fully understandable and we sympathize with them. What worries us and all partisans of the Chinese revolution is not this but a bureaucratic pattern of response to the American threat of attack that actually weakens the defense of China and increases the difficulties for the antiwar movement, particularly in the United States.

It is perfectly clear that one of the main objectives of the Mao regime is to prepare the Chinese people for an attack by American imperialism. This is good. But it is also perfectly clear that there are sound reasons for debating the nature of the preparations and their effectiveness. It is the right of any partisan of China and the world socialist revolution to raise questions concerning defense policy; after all they are manning the defenses in some key areas. But it happens that the debate did not originate abroad. The source was in China itself and it was evidently echoed and voiced by wide sectors of the Communist party and the youth and a significant sector of the leadership itself. When you take a stand on these questions you necessarily indicate where you stand in relation to the different groupings inside China.

The crisis, of course, ties in with domestic problems and policies. The differences that finally took explosive form go back a number of years as is emphasized by the official version itself of the issues.

By carefully analyzing the contradictory reports in the official material and the equally contradictory reports from other sources, it is possible to see at least three, if not four tendencies.

The least important of these appears to be the bourgeois restorationist tendency although its representatives have long enjoyed sheltered positions. It is true that they have been singled out for sharp verbal assaults by spokesmen of the regime; but these same bourgeois elements also appear to have been assured that they need not worry. The Mao regime is less tender with Trotskyists, some of whom have been kept in prison since 1952.

More important is the tendency paralleling the Khrushchevist current in the bureaucracies of the workers states. Perhaps this tendency is of the greatest immediate concern to the regime since it has strong potential if not actual allies in other countries.

To the left can be discerned the outlines of a tendency that may be in revolutionary opposition to the bureaucratic group holding power, or whose criticisms and proposals run along that line.

Finally there is the Mao group, which has balanced between these tendencies in previous years. It now pictures them as a single hostile force that is seeking to put China on the road to "revisionism" and the eventual restoration of capitalism. But it is not certain as to just how cohesive the Mao group itself is. Figures long identified with it have been the target of attacks.

The relative strength of the oppositional tendencies and the degree to which they have emerged as conscious formations is very difficult to determine in the absence of any democracy whatsoever in conducting the polemics.

It is similarly difficult to determine in what way and to what degree the various tendencies reflect social differentiations and tensions in Chinese society. But that such social roots do exist and do play a big role is obvious to all Marxists. Undoubtedly, with better information, instructive parallels could be pointed out between the China of today and the Soviet Union of the twenties, bearing in mind, of course, some very big differences.

For example, there is an obvious parallel in the problem of industrialization with several striking differences. The Chinese workers had to begin at a lower level than the Russian workers; but on the other hand they received tremendous assistance from a more developed workers state, only to have that assistance abruptly withdrawn.

In the problem of bureaucratization, the Chinese could profit from the lessons of the costly pattern in the Soviet Union. On the other hand, the main leader Mao himself made Stalin a hero in the teeth of the de-Stalinization process in the Soviet Union. And while China did not have its own Stalin, neither did it have its Trotsky and the Left Opposition, and in contrast to the Cubans who blocked an Escalante, the Chinese have seen the development of a cult of the personality that in some respects has gone further than the cult in the Soviet Union in creating a living god.

On the key question concerning the crystallization of a bureaucratic caste, all the differences with the situation in postrevolutionary Russia must be borne in mind. Nevertheless, we know that this tendency reaches its greatest intensity precisely when surpluses begin to appear after very harsh austerity, as seems to be the case now in China. Even relatively small privileges then loom large.

As we have seen in so many other aspects of the Chinese revolution, it is hazardous to rely too heavily on western patterns in seeking gauges and norms. Nevertheless the general concept provided by Marx and elaborated quite fully by Trotsky on the tendency toward reversion in a society that institutes socialist forms but is still afflicted with abysmal poverty deserves the most careful consideration in trying to judge trends in Chinese society at the present time.

A further parallel can be drawn in the light of the Russian experience. The defeats abroad that served to favor the bureaucracy in the Soviet Union had another consequence besides helping to consolidate the bureaucracy. Stalinism acted as a new depressant on the revolutionary movement abroad. The

rise of the cult of Mao and the current crisis in China likewise give every promise of serving as a new depressant on top of the defeats in a series of countries. It is not likely to be a depressant of the size and severity of Stalinist monolithism due to a number of reasons. The most prominent is the memory of the fate of the cult of Stalin, the increasing instability of the world situation, and the existence of a number of workers states which cannot avoid engaging in rivalry for influence and thus continually shaking up the vanguard. The great basic upsurge of the colonial world also guarantees that setbacks and defeats will not enable the regimes in either Moscow or Peking to block for very long the deep trend toward the revival or establishment of proletarian democracy -- not even by deifying by Mao. Stalin's personal rule represented a regime of permanent crisis; the heritage has been passed on to his lieutenants and admirers, and considerably intensified in recent years.

While we are on the subject, we should note Moscow's gains in the Sino-Soviet dispute and decide where we should put them in balancing up the accounts. It would appear that they register a certain disappointment, and even demoralization in some instances in the vanguard. Most certainly these gains do not reflect a rise in revolutionary fervor in the vanguard such as occurs in conjunction with an upsurge and the extension of the revolution into new areas. It could not have happened except in the wake of defeats.

It is very important for our movement to understand the strength of the bureaucracy in China and equally important to understand how to struggle against it. As in the Soviet Union, it is necessary for us to explain the social roots of the cult that has appeared. The theoretical equipment for that can only be drawn from the heritage left by Trotsky.

One of the conclusions that seems quite clear is that the tendency towards bureaucratism was facilitated and given impetus by the setbacks abroad, especially in Indonesia. With all due regard for the differences we find here another parallel to what happened in the case of the Soviet Union.

It should likewise be noted that the new setbacks, culminating with the crisis in Peking, made it possible for the Kremlin to drop some of its demagogic pretenses in the image it seeks to present abroad. A striking shift is to be noted in many areas. Instead of Gromyko assisting a Soviet representative in pounding a shoe on his desk at the United Nations, the same Gromyko engages in secret talks with Rusk and Johnson -- and this in face of the escalation of the war in Vietnam.

A big part of the responsibility for this is directly due to Mao's ultraleft extremism which ends up by rehabilitating Khrushchevism and thereby bolstering the Kremlin's opportunism. The Kremlin's opportunism in turn feeds

Johnson's policy of escalating the war in Vietnam.

In the crisis in China, we must be very clear on several key questions, above all on how the crisis has affected the struggle for proletarian democracy in China; and by that token, in the other workers states.

On this, there can scarcely be any doubt, the struggle for proletarian democracy has suffered. The net effect as of now has been to strengthen the cult of Mao.

The "cultural revolution" has revealed in the most graphic way that Mao's thought, as it is called, does not represent a living body of revolutionary theory. It is a scripture, now preserved in tens of millions of copies to be waved, quoted and recited the way the Holy Book is waved, quoted and recited among the Bible thumpers. This is a depressing spectacle ill-designed to create a favorable impression among thinking workers and revolutionary-minded intellectuals abroad and even less so among them in China, one must feel. Yet it is quite clear why Mao permitted his writings to be made into a scripture and even instigated and whipped up this development of a new religion. Self-criticism is for others. His policies, particularly in Indonesia cannot stand up under critical examination. Rather than setting an example in self-criticism, Mao preferred to convert what he had written and said into sacred texts, which as every true believer and cultist knows are infallible and not to be profaned by questioning.

What kind of discussion can be held on the real problems facing revolutionary China when the utterances of a leader of one of the groups are given the stamp of divinity?

The appearance of the Red Guards and their mobilization with army backing against the Communist party and the Communist youth was not exactly part and parcel of a free discussion in accordance with the norms of democratic centralism. Whatever the revolutionary fervor and idealism of the youth composing the Red Guards, they were used as a battering ram against a free discussion and a resolution of differences in accordance with proletarian democracy. This is an outstanding fact in the crisis, bearing witness to the absence of the institutions and procedures of proletarian democracy in China.

It reinforces the correctness of the general theoretical conclusion that in the absence of such institutions and procedures, explosive pressures tend to build up. In resorting to the Red Guards, Mao himself turned to the road of direct action. The lesson is an important one. It shows that proletarian democracy in China is not going to be handed down from above on a platter. The Chinese workers and peasants will have to struggle for it by mobilizing their own forces and carrying out a political revolution.

The status of the party and the youth remains obscure along with the perspective for the Red Guards. How the crisis affecting these institutions is affecting the armed forces is another huge unknown.

Whatever the answers we may get to these and similar questions -- and we may not have to wait long for the answers -- it is clear that it would be a great mistake to place the slightest confidence in any initiative from Mao in sponsoring a policy that can bring the Johnson administration to a halt in escalating the war. At a certain point either Peking or Moscow or both of them may feel they have no choice but to act. This, however, is not the same as a consistent revolutionary policy, or any policy at all for that matter.

The only tendency holding government power that has broached such a policy is the Cuban leadership. Fidel Castro advocated strong countermeasures immediately after the escalation began. This line has been voiced by the Cubans in Communist circles internationally. Recently they were joined in this by the North Koreans.

A similar approach was voiced by the Fourth International from the beginning; and appeals of like nature have been issued by such influential figures as Jean-Paul Sartre.

It is the only policy that can break the vicious circle from which American imperialism is now profiting.

In looking at the international scene as a whole and estimating the dangerous drift set in motion by the temporary successes of American imperialism, a possibility must be borne in mind that escapes prediction -- this is the sudden intervention of the masses in any of a dozen different countries.

The abruptness of such turns as occurred in Cuba and the Dominican Republic has become part of the pattern of world politics.

When the military take over, as they have on a vast scale under the protective shield of American imperialist power, one of the consequences is that the indigenous ruling classes on whom Washington relies lose contact with the masses. The molecular processes that continue to go on even under the worst dictatorships are lost to view. Everything is hidden under the smooth surface imposed by the imperialist-supported military forces. Then all at once, sometimes due to something apparently trivial, the masses go into movement and a political explosion occurs. We can confidently count on this to occur; but it is impossible to say when or where.

These subterranean forces do not work in isolation. They work in connection with and often under the inspiration of international events.

The heroic resistance of the Vietnamese people is playing this role right now. Modern communications, and especially television is bringing the struggle of the Vietnamese people directly into the homes of millions of people all around the globe. This has an inevitable effect, as everyone is aware from his own reactions in watching the newscasts.

Closely tied in with this has been the effect the anti-war movement in the United States has had on opinion in other countries. After the long years when McCarthyism made the U.S. look like a totalitarian country, the demonstrations mounted by opponents of the war in Vietnam had tremendous international impact. Not least was the encouragement it gave the vanguard in other countries by showing them they had allies and sympathizers right inside the United States itself.

Thus the importance of the antiwar movement inside the U.S. cannot be overstressed.

Finally, the civil-rights struggle inside the United States which has advanced to the point where -- under the banner of "black power" -- it has begun to consider the problem of independent political action with increasing interest, has likewise had an enormously encouraging effect abroad. The demonstrations associated with the struggle for equality are only a foretaste of what will occur when the American workers start to move in a massive way again. Even firm and militant strikes like those undertaken by the subway workers and the airplane mechanics have a stirring effect in other countries.

Developments such as these give us every reason for maintaining our optimistic outlook. But our optimism would be merely superficial if we did not take into account defeats and reverses and seek to probe their causes and effects. If we examine them objectively, draw the right lessons from them and put them in proper perspective against the background of the death agony of capitalism, then it is quite certain that we will succeed in solving the problem of revolutionary leadership -- and in time to prevent the catastrophe of a nuclear war.

Political Report to November 1966 Plenum

by

Farrell Dobbs

The main feature of the present political conjuncture is an increasingly favorable turn in the objective situation from our revolutionary-socialist point of view. Of central importance to us is the gestation of an anti-capitalist political trend. You will note I used the term gestation. What we are perceiving is as yet essentially an anticipation, not at all a full blown reality. The trend is not yet marked by the rise of any substantial anti-capitalist political formations within the mass movement. It is characterized only by the appearance of an incipient trend of that kind, especially within the black power tendency in the Negro movement. The main thing for us in this connection at present is that the improving objective developments are producing increasingly fertile soil in the mass movement for us to seed with our propaganda in support of anti-capitalist political action. To us that is of paramount importance because, at this historic juncture in the world crisis of capitalism, any mass radicalization to have full meaning must include the blooming of anti-capitalist political action.

We should note also, as we move into the next period, that there are fresh signs that abrupt changes can take place in the national political situation, changes of one or another magnitude occurring at one or another tempo. As yet, the tempos are still uncertain because the mass movement remains in a highly contradictory political state of transition; but enough is already happening that we can anticipate improved opportunities for the party to intervene in the mass movement in its various sections. We strive there to establish ties with the militants who are beginning to grope toward a new political course, but who do not have clearly in mind any definite outlook other than a desire to see a change in political approach.

The most important national political development is the corroding of the consensus that took form around Johnson in the 1964 presidential elections. Within this process the key feature for us is the crumbling of pro-Johnson sentiment on the left flank of the coalition. The main signs of this trend, as it is now manifested, are among students and intellectuals in the antiwar movement and among black militants. We should note also that there has been a significant reaction to Johnson's slick pitch on social reforms. The Democrats have put on a propaganda parlay that tries to make a big deal out of what amounts to nothing more nor less than tokenism and gradualism in dealing with the social problems confronting the American people. Although one of the most significant maneuvers of the kind since the New Deal period of the 1930's, it didn't serve

the intended purpose. It failed to counteract discontent over the war, over inflation and over the frustrations that are aggravating the civil rights movement. The result is that the coalition around Johnson has been running into ever-deeper trouble. On the whole, we should note that the dissidents who are beginning to break from the Johnson coalition still have reformist illusions. But they are also showing a growing distrust of capitalist politicians, and they are manifesting an increasing urge to find new forms of political expression and action.

It is within this broad framework that we should assess the results of the November 8th elections. The mass political trends were not clearly revealed in the elections and they could not be. There was no real posing of the basic issues by the Republicans and Democrats. It was one of the shabbiest, the fakest of election contests that we have seen in recent times. Therefore it is hard to ferret out main trends in the political moods and thinking of the masses on the basis of the election returns, but there are certain important features that come to light upon close examination.

We should note first that there do not seem to be any significantly new trends toward abstentions in the elections. On the contrary, one has to look more for discernible signs that the voters were trying to express themselves on key issues, as best they could, in the farce of the general election contest between the capitalist politicians.

The main categories that emerged, where there is at least partial evidence of trends, can be described roughly as follows: Generally, on the war question, the voters showed a tendency to support "doves" as against "hawks." This was shown in a number of elections around the country, not in the sense that capitalist opponents of the "hawk" line were on a really antiwar line, but more in the form of opposition to candidates who supported a full blown "hawk" line. One example of that was the outcome of the contest in Oregon; another was the defeat of a candidate in New Hampshire running as a "hawk!"

Another significant manifestation was the referendum in Dearborn, Michigan. Without going into the exact terminology of the proposition that was put to the voters -- what it came to was "Are you in favor of, or are you opposed to Johnson's Vietnam war policy" -- 40 percent of the voters were against the Johnson policy. As the referendum was worded, their vote implied support of the withdrawal demand. Remember this occurred at a time when a shooting war is on. If this question had been put to the voters prior to the escalation in Vietnam, the percentage in opposition would surely have been much greater than it was. It is a good sign of the mounting opposition to the war.

A further instructive example, in a different category but with great significance, is the unprecedented support that our candidates received in this election. We got support reaching far beyond anything that we had been able to gain before. Other sections of the movement, prominent individuals, etc., publicly declared for our candidates. This should be noted as another of the factors manifesting a deepening of the opposition to the war in Vietnam.

The next category is the question of racism. Without any doubt there was a pronounced manifestation of racist reaction to the Freedom Now Struggle in the elections. It showed itself all across the classes, including the working class. We should note also, in order to evaluate this as precisely as we can, that while it was a definite factor in the elections it was not a decisive factor as against all other issues. Sometimes a vote would go in the direction of a candidate who was less harsh in his anti-Negro racist line because other issues were involved. For example, down in Maryland one candidate ran on the central plank "your home is your castle". He got beat in the election because that wasn't quite enough to cut the mustard against all the other issues that were involved in the minds of the voters.

Less directly perceptible, but clearly present as an issue in the voter's minds, was the inflation issue. Here I note, for example that Louis Harris, the pollster, made a statement that on the basis of his total study of the election returns, there was no question at all about the voters trying to find a way, as best they could, to express their opposition to runaway prices.

Also perceptible in the election returns was the rise of a general anti-Johnson trend; that in a sort of a broad, sweeping way showed how the consensus is beginning to come apart at the seams. Something else to be noted is the significant shift back toward support to the Republicans, not in sufficient degree to unseat the Democrats from a majority in the Congress, but in quantity enough to manifest a reversal of the 1964 trend, when the Democrats made such a big sweep in the Congressional elections.

Among the voters it appears that mainly the urban middle class and the farmers made the major shift away from support of the Democrats in 1964 to support of the Republicans in the 1968 elections. There were also Republican gains among Negroes and among workers generally, but here it should be noted that in both cases the main support still went to the Democrats.

One other significant result of the elections was the success recorded by the Black Panther party in Lowndes County. I believe they got 41 percent of the vote under circumstances which to all practical intents and purposes, make this an

impressive partial victory. I might add parenthetically that, if you haven't already done so, you should read the excellent on-the-spot report in the Militant prepared by comrades who went down there. As a matter of fact militants throughout the country are probably going to get through our paper a clearer, more concise report of what actually happened in Lowndes County than they will get anywhere else. Although the the black militants didn't win, they came up with a big vote, and they made one definitive gain. They established the Black Panther party as a legal, valid party in that county in Alabama.

Looking at the Republican gains from another point of view, their vote exceeded the pre-election predictions. Now did this manifest a shift to the right? Well, what did the voters have to choose between? They could see no big difference between the two major parties. In both cases they had to choose either conservatives or outright reactionaries, on the one side, or reconstructed liberals who today call themselves moderates, on the other. That's a pretty narrow choice within which to exercise a lesser-evil vote and that is what the average voter obviously felt he was confronted with. It is significant to note that, within this framework, it was mostly moderates who were elected in the victories registered by Republicans.

There were some gains made by outright reactionaries. If I may use Brooklyn terminology, I'd say your boy Reagan in California is not exactly a "poil." At the same time we should note that in the process of the campaign such reactionaries backed off from some of the most extreme ultra-right positions and, while they were doing that, the liberals moved more and more toward "moderation." The result is that, on balance, there was a general shift to the right among the capitalist candidates. A big attempt is already being made by the capitalist propaganda machine to create the impression that this means a swing to the right within the general voting population of this country. Well, that's a fake and a fraud from beginning to end.

What will be the results of the elections, first of all from the point of view of our anticipation of the line of the ruling class? The election outcome leads to the strengthening of the Republican-Southern Democratic coalition in Congress; that, in turn, provides a cover, an alibi for Johnson to move further to the right, trying all the time to tell the public he doesn't like to but he can't "help" himself, as they say down where the national bird was born. This will be done especially in subordinating all other social considerations to further escalation of the war in Southeast Asia. The escalation of that war, that we can definitely expect in the next period, will in turn help to forestall for a time yet an economic recession which otherwise would soon develop, perhaps by next year. But even though it wards off

a slump for a while, an economic decline is implicit in the way the prolonged 1961-1966 boom has tapered off in recent times.

Although escalation helps to ward off an economic slump, it also entails further inflation and a trend toward a decline in real wages. Our comrades, who undertake to specialize in matters economic, have some differences of opinion about what the score is at the moment on the real wage. I note, by the way, that the same difference of opinion seems to be reflected among economists on the staffs of the trade unions. For instance, the coal miners take the Dick Roberts line, that the decline in real wages is already beginning; other union economists are in some cases uncertain that an actual decline has already set in; their thinking is more in line with that of the Barnes-Al Hansen school. It is an important question and our economists should look into it very closely. Whether the finding will be that we are still in a tapering off of the upward trend of real wages, or that a decline is beginning, one thing is already clear politically. The masses, in terms of what they see on price tags in the supermarkets and elsewhere in the retail sphere, are drawing their own conclusions about what is happening and they are raising hell about it.

Meantime there is a steady process of attrition on existing jobs that results from automation and from generally intensified exploitation of labor. In addition to intensifying the labor process, the capitalists want a higher degree of unemployment because, for reasons with which you are all familiar, full employment is a handicap in itself to capitalist exploitation of labor. On top of all this, the next economic slump, which will inevitably come, is going to intensify all the social contradictions that now exist. Although we can't predict the exact tempos, we can be certain that in the coming period the economic factor is going to play an increasingly important role in disturbing the social equilibrium and heightening political polarizations within American society.

Stronger resistance to any general social measures can be expected in the next Congress. We can also expect attempts to pare down measures adopted by the last one; if not through direct revocation of one or another measure, or one or another facet of a measure, then by trying to bleed them to death through failure to make appropriations to implement them. At the same time Johnson and the Congress can be expected to make new attacks on the advocates of black power. Here again there will be a reversal. There is going to be the opposite, on balance, to the pattern of piddling legal concessions that has characterized Congressional action since the the 1954 Supreme Court decision. This is already signaled by what the Supreme Court did since the election. It has upheld a repressive attack on black freedom fighters seeking to demonstrate for their rights on public property. That's a little signal of the changing times. We can expect more of it.

We can expect in the next Congress stiffer anti-labor laws. They are already being readied for Congressional action and the propaganda mill is working to set the stage for their introduction into the next Congress. We can anticipate that they will relate not only to further restrictions on the right to strike but will also include further intrusion into the internal affairs of the unions along the lines manifested in the Kennedy-Landrums-Griffin Act of 1959.

We can expect further scare tactics against the antiwar movement; and it also is implicit that there will be intensification of extra-legal attacks against the mass movement, and particularly the vanguard of the mass movement, from the ultra-right. In the climate being generated further impetus is given for such terrible things as the murder of our comrade Leo Bernard and the grave injury of Jan and Walter by a demented man who, because of the political climate, was moved to direct his dementia in a political direction. We can expect more organized hooliganism from the ultra-right and, in this sense, we should take careful note of the two sides of the present government actions against the Minute Men. Out in Kansas City some leaders of the Minute Men have been convicted now, mainly on the charge of amassing arms in an illegal way, and here in New York a gang has been indicted on a similar basis. On one side, the evidence that is coming to light bears witness to the correctness of the contention made by ourselves and others on the left that it is organized gangs on the ultra-right that are responsible for the bombings that have been going on against the headquarters of the radical and antiwar movement, including the fire bombing of our headquarters right here not very long ago. That's one of the windows right there that they tried unsuccessfully to heave a bomb through. On the other side, however, this action by the government creates the danger of illusions within the movement that the capitalist ruling power can be relied upon to curb these terrorist attacks. We must keep that carefully in mind, because that lends fresh importance to an explanation why the radical and mass movements need to pay close attention to self-defense measures, as events in the coming period may practically and realistically dictate.

We can expect further attack in still another way. The ruling class will seek to divide the antiwar, civil rights and trade union movements with the aim of seeking to defeat them piecemeal, thereby maintaining a social equilibrium in the country through increasingly repressive measures. Our task, as against this, is to help build the most effective possible reciprocal alliance between the various sections of the mass movement; to promote mutual support between these sections on issues touching all sections and on issues touching individual sections; and in the process our key effort must be to push the whole struggle in an anti-capitalist direction, especially around what must become the central unifying issue -- anti-capitalist political action.

Concerning the specific features of the broad mass arena at the present conjuncture, let us look first at the antiwar movement. In broad lines, we can say that the dispute over the advocacy of immediate withdrawal of the troops from Vietnam, as against the proposal for a negotiated peace, finds us in a more propitious situation today than we were when the antiwar movement began to escalate after February, 1965. We should note also that in the elections this November the peace candidate line was pretty much a flop, from the point of view of being able to produce anything significant for advocates of that line. During the coming year there will be only minor elections that hamper somewhat, not entirely but somewhat, the possibilities for those advocating a peace candidate line to push their merchandise within the antiwar movement. That in turn helps create circumstances that facilitate promotion of our line of direct confrontation with the capitalist government, which is really the only meaningful type of political action that the antiwar movement, as it is presently constituted, can carry forward.

Next we should note, with reference to the antiwar movement, that a degree of demoralization is manifested within its ranks because of failure to get results. No matter what the militants do, Johnson goes right ahead with the escalation. They aren't able to stay the hand of the imperialist war hawks. That's one side. The other side is that new student activists are coming onto the scene. The right wing within the antiwar movement has had to become a little more receptive to principled united front action with the more militant forces within the antiwar movement. Negro opposition to the war continues to grow, and there is increasing restiveness about the war within the trade unions. Signs are appearing of an incipient trend toward opposition to the war among the troops, especially among the new draftees. These are the two sides.

On balance, we have to recognize that the going is still tough for the antiwar movement. The problems remain complex from the point of view of mood, on top of everything else, with respect to our work in the movement. It remains as yet a vanguard force that is swimming against a strong counter current, with many diverting cross currents impinging upon it, and we have to be very attentive to that. We should neither overstate the potential, nor underestimate the significance of new developments in this sphere. We need to exchange information and think out loud collectively to get a better feel of the nuances of this matter.

There is growing mass discontent about the war. But here again, there is a real problem for the antiwar movement because, in the main, the discontent is not yet crystalizing into active, organized opposition. So far there are only embryonic manifestations in that direction in areas outside the antiwar movement, as it is presently constituted. Yet we can assume that

further escalation of the war is going to stimulate new impulses toward organized support to the antiwar movement from those quarters. And that brings us to an important tactical question.

As sections of the Negro and trade union movement shift toward active opposition to the war, their actions will stem primarily from the war's impact on matters concerning their direct social needs. It'll be not so much due to the war as such, but because they're hurt in other ways through the war, and they will tend to bring such matters forward in their protest against the war, whatever forms those protests may take. It's important to keep that carefully in mind as we examine our tactical problems in the antiwar movement, and I want to return to that question in a minute. First, I want to deal with some other points concerning our tactics in the next immediate period in the antiwar movement.

Opposition to the capitalist draft is not only a legitimate part of the antiwar movement in our view, it is a thing to be kept in the fore at all times. But how does this opposition manifest itself at this stage? That's the question. There is no present sign of mass resistance to the actual carrying out of the capitalist draft. Pending such prospects we have to be very careful that we don't give any edge to attempts to resist the draft in mistaken forms, and these fall into two broad categories. One category is this: We make no concession to pacifist methods of resisting the draft. We admire the courage, the valor of those who take the road of conscientious objection, but it's not for us. It's a principled political question, as you all well know. The other category is that we give no quarter to impulses toward adventurous methods of substituting action by a handful for mass resistance to the draft and trying thereby to galvanize the masses into action. Such a course can only lead to costly victimizations of militants who are in the vanguard of the movement and, at the same time, it diverts the movement from purposeful activity.

There's another little catch regarding the draft that also touches on another subject. Here, as in everything else, watch out for peace-candidate-line gimmicks from the Stalinists. One of the things these jokers have been coming up with in recent times is a proposal to organize an antidraft lobby; get committees together and go around and call on Congressmen; any gimmick they can think of to push their line of class collaborationist politics within the framework of the Democratic party. We want to be on the alert to oppose that too.

Now, concerning the question of the propaganda approach of the antiwar movement to the troops, we are opposed on principle to the injection of pacifist tactics of passive resistance, etc. This is an important thing to keep in mind with respect to our support to the Fort Hood Three. The basis of our support to the Fort Hood Three is that we defend their right to carry out a legal challenge against what they have so aptly termed an "illegal, unjust war in Vietnam." Within that framework, political

lessons can be drawn that give political impetus to opposition to the war. It's good to note that in the most recent document gotten out by the Fort Hood Three Committee, addressing themselves to Johnson, the first point they make is that: "It is the firm conviction of the citizens signing this statement that men who enlist or are drafted into the armed services should not be deprived of their rights as citizens to exercise freedom of thought, conscience and expression in matters relating to the war in Vietnam." That's very good, because such an approach has to be central at the present juncture to the approach to the troops. We defend the political rights of the citizen-soldiers.

For virtually a century now -- because there has not been strong opposition to a shooting war -- a myth has been developing that a citizen drafted into the armed forces loses all his Constitutional rights. And you can expect the military brass and the government to use that myth to attack the antiwar movement as law breakers. In reply it can be shown that the military brass and the capitalist government are the violators of the law because they're undertaking to abrogate the Constitutional rights of citizen-soldiers; the right to freedom of thought, the right to freedom of expression, and the right to freedom of association among citizen-soldiers in political terms. These remarks should not be construed as preparation for a shift from our work in the antiwar movement as it now exists toward a campaign centered on defense of the political rights of citizen-soldiers; it's not a turn in that sense. It is a problem for the antiwar movement itself and our concern with it does not represent any considerations apart from our work in the antiwar movement.

To come back to the point I mentioned about the development of opposition to the war in various sectors of the mass movement, we meet the multi-issue question in a new form. As was pointed out, when earlier we hammered out the reasons for our single-issue approach in the antiwar movement, as against the multi-issue approach of the political class collaborationists, it's not a matter of tactics, not a principled question. We oppose the multi-issue line within the antiwar movement itself because it is intended to divert the movement into Democratic party politics. We counterpose the single-issue approach for that reason; and also because on the single-issue basis -- bring the troops home now -- we can promote a direct confrontation with the government. This provides the best basis for broad united front action within the antiwar movement, under circumstances where important differences would immediately come to the fore if the movement adopted the multi-issue approach advocated by political class collaborationists. It's a different matter where a question arises of cooperation of the Negro and trade union movements with the antiwar movement, and vice versa. As I observed earlier, when objective developments impel these sectors of the mass movement toward support of antiwar actions, they will want to include issues of specific importance to themselves, and their opposition to the war will tend to be expressed primarily through that form. It follows that, in moving toward collaboration of the antiwar movement with these sectors of the mass movement, a new flexibility will be required on the multi-issue question. But note, at the same time, that

the policy change arises concerning relations with allies elsewhere in the mass movement; it does not automatically entail a shift from the single-issue approach within the antiwar movement itself. For the reasons stated before, the factors that have required a single-issue tactic in the latter sphere remain generally valid.

The key political problem in the antiwar movement is the mishmash of "new left" politics. We have to keep in mind, when we approach this question, that the antiwar movement is based mainly on students and intellectuals. The "new left" politics that have been adumbrated within that sphere add up to what can be described as a left-liberal revolt against the Democratic party's shift to the right. Those pushing that line seek to use the young antiwar militants for liberal-capitalist political ends. For that purpose, they have advanced a program of petty-bourgeois reforms that in no way represent a break with capitalist politics. Any so-called "independent" candidacies that may emanate from that milieu can only represent a tactical maneuver to gain advantage in a factional struggle against the entrenched machine, particularly in the Democratic party. This trend does not represent a third party movement. So far it remains confined essentially to new forms of faction politics within the existing two-party system. If it were to become a third party movement, as it is now constituted, it would by its very class nature evolve in the direction of a third capitalist party. I want to come back to that question later, but there are some other factors that we should review before we look more deeply into it.

During the next period we can expect intensified opposition within the antiwar movement to the present forms of capitalist rule -- not to capitalist rule as such -- but to the present forms of capitalist rule. As the movement grows, it will itself undergo changes in form within which anti-capitalist content can begin to appear. Now, there's an important nuance here about the changes in form. Until the movement expands to that point that its class character begins to change -- with the Negro movement and the working class generally coming into support of the struggle against the war -- changes in form will tend to be toward development of a third capitalist party. But once the class content begins to change, then changes in form can imply motion leading in the direction of anti-capitalist political action. Meantime, we have to keep carefully in mind that, as matters now stand, a break with capitalist politics by the antiwar movement still lies somewhere ahead. It would be a mistake for us to be looking now for any seeming "borderline" cases where we could give critical support to an "independent" candidate. These seeming "independent" candidacies will represent only a round-about form of factional tactics inside the capitalist two-party system.

Within the antiwar movement, political forms of action can at present focus only around direct confrontations with the cap-

italist government. In the course of these actions, young militants will continue to draw political lessons, especially if we are right there to help them draw those lessons. As is already the case, many of them can be recruited directly into our movement. To the extent that we succeed in such recruitment, we will to that degree strengthen our vanguard forces in preparation for the coming anti-capitalist radicalization that objective trends are beginning to forecast. That radicalization is the music of a time that lies somewhere ahead. At the present juncture within the antiwar movement, our major effort must be directed toward the spring action that will probably be projected at a conference to be held in about a week in Cleveland. Between now and that spring action, it is important for us to keep a sense of proportion about the nature and the tempo of our activity within the antiwar movement. We should not rush pell-mell, at full speed ahead, all the time. In the course of preparation for the spring action, we need to pace our work in a dual sense: consolidate our contacts, clarify line, clarify issues, clarify tactics as an integral part of our preparation for the coming major action; and as we draw closer to the time of the action, develop more intensified patterns of all-out activity. I don't mean that we do nothing in the antiwar movement right now. It is a matter of shifting gears a little, from the point of view of tempo, and we have to be aware of the need for flexibility in matters of that kind.

Turning now to the Negro movement: It seems clear that the Nov. 8 elections are bound to further shatter illusions among black militants about capitalist politicians. As a matter of fact, as Fred remarked in the Political Committee, the average Negro must feel in the aftermath of the election that he is pretty much isolated in a sea of white hostility. One of the outstanding examples of that is the result of the vote over this milk-and-water civilian review board of Lindsay's here in New York. That's no doubt the case today, but it won't stem the growing militancy among the black freedom fighters. They remain Negroes, they're just as black as they were the day before the election, and they are just as much social pariahs as they were the day before the election. They remain an oppressed minority that are hit doubly hard by the war; they get it with both barrels on inflation; theirs is the worst degree of unemployment in any category of the working class; and they are the most victimized in general social discrimination. They are bound to continue pressing hard for freedom now. Therefore, coming events can be expected to give new stimulus to the tendency within the freedom now struggle that advocates the concept of black power.

Within the black power tendency itself, there are conflicting currents. Some still want to stay within the framework of capitalist politics. They are particularly susceptible to the political tricks of the "new left," and we should keep that carefully in mind, too, in coping with the new forms of class-collaborationist politics they are trying to cook up in the

onstrations and picket lines. As action increases it will have an impact on the middle class. Working class criteria will become more predominant in at least the lower strata of the middle class, as against the present deep penetration of bourgeois ideology from that milieu into the general mass movement.

Politically, insofar as a black political party may develop in flat opposition to capitalist politics, fresh impetus will be given to broader working class trends of comparable nature, i.e., motion toward formation of an independent labor party. Developments of that kind will provide a qualitatively new basis for us to intervene on an ever-higher political plane within the mass movement, and out of this will develop the fundamental thing we are after in our transitional program; namely, take the present consciousness within various sections of the mass movement as our point of departure; push transitional demands containing anti-capitalist content; point always toward the idea of the working class taking the mass lead in a struggle for power to abolish capitalism and establish a socialist society.

As I perceive it, these are the essential lines along which to approach the drafting of a transitional program related to the specific needs of the black freedom struggle, and I think the Plenum should definitely encourage further development of the ideas which Comrade Breitman has tentatively projected.

Next I come to the trade unions. The November elections reflected an effort in the top union bureaucracy, a tentative effort by a section of it, to return to old-style Gompersism, that is, reward your friends, and punish your enemies by jumping back and forth between the Republicans and Democrats. Let's just look briefly at the history of the matter. The Gompers line was dropped during the labor upsurge of the 30's. The labor movement, particularly after the consolidation of the CIO, shifted over to developing a coalition with the Democratic party. That marked a turn to what could be described as the practice of faction politics within one of the capitalist parties, instead of trying to jump back and forth between them.

The labor movement chose the Democrats as the party of reform, which is how it is generally known to the working class, as against the Republican party, which the workers look upon as the party of the status quo. The union bureaucrats went over to faction politics in that form because the old Gompers line didn't work. They went over to faction politics among the Democrats and that's proven bankrupt, so now they try to overcome that handicap by going back where grandpa was, back to the old Gompers line. Well, that isn't going to work either. Under modern conditions the unions can't solve a single thing through a return to pre-New Deal political tactics. They'll just compound confusion. There is another thing to note with

regard to this development. While the tentative break among the bureaucrats with faction politics within the Democratic party took the form of support of the Republicans, what it really amounts to is a negative manifestation of the deepening political crisis that the trade union movement finds itself in because it remains the tail of the capitalist political kite. It shows the pressure of a growing need on the part of the trade unions for a break with capitalist politics, and it foretells a coming trend toward formation of a labor party.

At present the whole objective situation points in the direction of growing labor militancy. The struggle upsurge can be characterized at this juncture as primarily one of an increase in defensive actions due to loss of buying power. This is manifested by the rising emphasis within the trade unions on cost-of-living escalator clauses in the renegotiation of contracts. It is manifested also in the consistent way in which unions in recent struggles have been breaking Johnson's "guidelines." On top of that, the workers are goaded toward defensive struggles because of resentment over the speedup pressures and bad working conditions in general. There is also the backlog of grievances that continues to grow and grow in plant, after plant, after plant. Now, this is only a beginning, but there are already some significant things to note. Take, for instance, the speed of the shift in working class mood. Remember there has been a prolonged period of many years in which there has been relative prosperity for a majority of the working class. We are now along toward the end of the fifth year of the most extended boom of the post-war period. Don't forget that. Yet it has taken only a very brief period of growing threats to the workers standard of living to provoke a swift reaction. This reaction has been marked by increasing militancy throughout 1966 beginning with the transit workers' strike that welcomed in the New Year.

This trend is stimulating a revival of class consciousness among the workers. I don't want to overstate that. I said "class consciousness." Perhaps it would be better to use another term -- a sense of class solidarity or of the need for class solidarity -- because as yet it is largely a pragmatic trend, not a fully conscious one. Our job is to intervene in this molecular process of change, take advantage of this growing awareness of the need for class solidarity, in order to help union militants develop toward the highest plane of class consciousness -- and that in political terms. The change in mood shows increasing signs of spreading through the class as a whole, including workers with the most secure jobs and the highest rates of pay. The developing breadth of the mood is reflected also in the boycott movement launched by housewives. Here you have a reflex of the wide extent to which resentment is growing over the attrition of rising prices on the family budget right now, and growing apprehensions about the standard of living if this process continues. It is far reaching in the population. I don't think there is any question that, if one had

all the statistics, you would find that this boycott movement ranges all the way from minority peoples, who are in the worst economic position, to people in a relatively good position economically in the labor aristocracy and the middle class. That's an indication of things to come as the contradictions of capitalism bear down more heavily on the people in this country.

We can anticipate that the workers will connect the war more directly with this growing threat to their standard of living, especially with further escalation of the war and further pressures upon them as a result. The conclusions they will reach are already forecasted by the present tendency, being shown to an increasing degree, to fight if they have a wage beef, whether or not the given productive facility is engaged in manufacturing things for the war in Vietnam. I would add in this general connection that during the next immediate period we can expect further development of what one might call guerilla warfare on the part of an increasing number of workers, against the bosses, against the government and against the labor fakers.

In fact there are already growing signs of opposition to bureaucratic policy within the unions, which shows what a gap there is between the line of the bureaucrats and imperative needs of the workers. In recent times there has been an increase in the tendency on the part of the union membership to reject contract settlements presented to them by the bureaucrats. The workers tell the bureaucrats, "Go back and get us some more." Also to be noted is that workers are tending to an increasing degree to assert their right to strike. There has been an increase in walkouts over local beefs and, here again, there are new signs of insistence on a membership voice in determining whether negotiated settlement of grievances is acceptable. This heralds a coming trend toward meaningful changes in the trade union leadership.

Something happened this week that shows promise of giving us quite a boost in the next period. Yesterday the New York Post carried an article about that sterling labor leader George (I-never-walked-a-picket-line) Meany. Now Meany is a tactical thinker and don't ever underestimate him. He added up the results of the November elections and saw a danger of Congress passing new anti-labor laws. So, being gifted in Aristotelian logic, he figured out that the problem is to outflank the capitalist politicians. How do you do it? Well there is a law of Aristotle's, namely, don't waste time solving problems that have already been solved. Meany looked back over the record and he found that during World War II the bureaucrats solved a similar problem by taking a no-strike pledge, and the government set up a board to, in effect, arbitrate labor disputes. This led him to raise the question of the labor movement taking a voluntary no-strike pledge where production for the war in Vietnam is involved and asking the government to set up a board to rule on contract disputes. I submit that Meany is a friend of ours -- although he doesn't know it -- because if he pushes this line

he will widen the gap between the union ranks and the bureaucracy at the top; he will help speed the day of a meaningful change in labor leadership.

The tempo of trade union developments will be determined objectively, in the times ahead, by the interplay of two aspects of the present situation of the imperialists. The capitalist ruling class faces a deepening foreign crisis but there is not yet a comparable degree of internal crisis here at home. Domestic social tensions are mounting, but we must remember that the extremely wealthy ruling class still has sufficient resources to make token concessions, designed to mollify social unrest among the masses. So there will not be a straight course of development. There will be ups and downs, changes in the tempo. It follows that, on the one side, we should not fall into any illusion that there will be a more or less steady march toward an increasing upsurge in the labor movement, leading directly toward mass radicalization, toward a break with capitalist politics and all that would follow. On the other side, we're getting powerful new ammunition to refute detractors of the historic role of the working class; those who claim that the capitalist class has so much wealth that it can always throw enough sops to the workers to keep them placid and conformist. As time passes the quantitative changes that are taking place in relations between the classes will lead toward a qualitative leap in the political class struggle; and it is toward that change we are working.

Let's note some of the nuances in the national political setup that are developing quantitatively at the moment. The 1964-1966 election experiences marked increasingly wide voter shifts back and forth between the two parties, within the two-party system. On one side this constitutes new political evidence of the deepening crisis of the capitalist system as a whole. That is, the two-party system is showing less internal stability. But on the other hand, despite these increasingly wide shifts in voting patterns, the capitalists are able to maintain a political equilibrium through the two-party system; that form of rule still has considerable capacity to serve the needs of the capitalist class. Part of the reason is that the masses have no significant choice between major party candidates. In that entrapment, of course, lies the political crime of the union bureaucrats, the Stalinists, and all the other practitioners of political class collaboration.

I'd like to note in passing that we were able to get in some good licks against the Stalinists on this question in the current elections; particularly as we were able to counterpose our critical support of Aptheker to their refusal to support our ticket in the elections. Our comrades did a little political mayhem on the Stalinists in the course of the campaign on that basis.

With the masses remaining entrapped in capitalist politics, there has been a further shift to the right within the two-party

system. For example, the "doves" have watered down still more their always-mild criticism of the Administration line on Vietnam. The whole Democratic Party shifted to the right during the election campaign. Reagan types, of course, went even further in that direction, although taking pains to avoid outright identification with the ultras. Reagan himself took such pains -- even in the California situation which was quite propitious for him -- no doubt fearful of risking a fiasco like Goldwater's if he went too far, too fast.

What it all adds up to is that there has been a further shift to the right in the general capitalist political structure, and in the general capitalist political line. That in turn will serve to intensify political polarizations going beyond the present two-party setup. Implicit in the situation are break aways from the Democratic party to the left and to the right. Also implicit in the situation is further growth of split-offs from the Republicans by ultras like the Conservative party in New York. Behind that lies mounting dangers of the growth of incipient fascism within the United States.

As the developing political polarizations become further intensified, we can expect stronger impulses within the antiwar movement toward a break with the two-party system. This in turn implies that too long a delay in the labor break with capitalist politics could mean a definite possibility of attempts to form a third capitalist party. Such a possibility is implicit in the middle class character of the present antiwar movement. Acting on its own, it lacks the necessary class basis to move all the way to anti-capitalist politics. That's why -- although it's not a certainty -- there is a definite possibility of an attempt to form a third capitalist party, particularly if there is too prolonged a delay in a labor break with the Democratic party. If that should come to pass we will be confronted with some complex new problems, and for that reason we should be on the alert for any coming signs of a trend in that direction.

The black power political trend, on the other hand, has an anti-capitalist viability that is imparted to it by the dual role of its exponents: as a black minority, and as workers. Any Negro break with the two-party system is bound to stimulate further growth of anti-capitalist political trends. But even such a break, cannot be politically decisive in and of itself because, even though most of the Negroes are workers, they are also a minority. A decisive break with capitalist politics will hinge upon action within the working class as a whole, black and white. Today there are encouraging upsurges of struggle within the unions that forecast such a coming trend, but the breakup of labor's coalition with the Democratic party still lies somewhere ahead. When it does come, the class basis will then be present, for a massive shift in an anti-capitalist political direction. A sweeping mass radicalization will then get under way in the fullest political sense of the term.

Concerning the mass movement as a whole, we have a major ideological problem -- it is perhaps the foremost of the problems facing us. It is the tendency within part of the radical movement, and in various sections of the mass movement, to write off the working class as a vanguard social force. That's a very important question to us, because it constitutes a challenge to our whole basic program. It has to be answered. Unless we do so, the fundamental premises from which -- through our transitional slogans -- we try to draw militants to support of our program and identification with our party, would be found wanting. We would be handicapped in our ability to influence these militants because, if they are not convinced that the working class is capable of playing the social role we say it is capable of, it will be hard to convince them to go along with our program. That's why we have to deal with this problem in our propaganda. We have to deal with it carefully, thoroughly, patiently, and repeatedly.

In conclusion I want to touch just on the main lines of the question of party activity in the next period as it relates to the work of our cadres. Intervention in the antiwar movement remains our top priority task. Our central problem there is to fight off attempts to derail the movement into class collaborationist politics. Our immediate political aim is to broaden the movement and intensify its confrontation with the capitalist government. In the process we strive to help the young antiwar militants learn the political lessons of their experiences in the struggle; also to prepare them to grapple with the increasingly complex problems that will confront them in the struggle against war. We seek in the course of that entire effort to recruit them directly to the youth and the party.

In the Negro struggle the main task is to propagate our line through our press and literature. So far as practical, we seek to participate in Negro actions and organizations, but at the present stage, as has been the case, these efforts must be spearheaded primarily by our Negro comrades. The rest of the party strives to give them all possible help in their activity. As an organization, we work to extend our contacts among black militants and in all possible ways do our best to recruit them to our movement.

In the trade unions we can anticipate coming chances to intervene. Comrades who have long held on in adversity in unions will find new prospects for carrying on party building activity. We can look forward to new openings developing for colonization of comrades in given situations. At the present stage, though, our efforts must center primarily on propaganda, analyzing developments, projecting our line into the union movement in whatever ways we can. At the same time we must keep closely abreast of all new developments in the unions and prepare to play an increasing role there in coming events.

Generally speaking, there is a greater need than ever for us to function as a campaign party. On the whole, these efforts must still relate mainly to our propaganda work. But we must also apply, to whatever degree we can, the campaign concept wherever we find realistic opportunities to intervene with our forces in the mass movement. There is a greater need than ever for us to

work together as a team, both in our collective thoughts about the complex period through which the country is beginning to pass politically, and in our organized activity, seeking to intervene wherever we can to influence developments. This, comrades, becomes more important than ever today, because we can find an increasing amount of political gold in them there hills if we just go out and dig for it.

November 18, 1966

Summary of Plenum Discussion on Political Report

By Farrell Dobbs

Comrades, the discussion of the political report has tended to center on two sticky problems that we face in the antiwar movement: The question of opposition to the capitalist draft, and the problem of attempts to interject "new left" politics into the antiwar movement. Both these problems have exceptional complications for us at this juncture, I would say, for the particular reason that there are mounting senses of urgency among a certain number of militants in the movement, who want to find a way to take some effective action at a juncture when objective conditions have not yet permitted realistic action. It puts us in a rather awkward position in some respects.

Comrade Ring observed that we have to be very careful to avoid appearing unconcerned about the draft. I think it's good that he made that point, because I put my central emphasis, in the limited remarks I was able to make about the draft question in the context of a total political report, on the side of other tactical problems. I did so because one of the objectives of the report, along with an endeavor to project a general strategic line of approach to our work in this period, was to deal with the most urgent tactical problems. That is why I didn't put main emphasis in the report on the pacifist and adventurist approaches to the draft issue.

These are important matters and the main factor, in this regard, is a tendency toward individualistic forms of action. That of course is the central characteristic in practice of the pacifist line of conscientious objection, the substituting of protest action by individuals where mass action is not possible. I don't mean to imply that pacifism, as such, envisages individual action merely as a prelude to mass action. Pacifism has its own principle of personal conscience which accentuates the role of the individual. As against that, our political approach to the fight against the draft is one of working toward mobilization of mass opposition. Pacifists interject the individualistic approach in a way that has the force and effect of elevating the welfare of the given individual above the political needs of the masses. It is a danger within the movement, despite the humane principles on which they proceed, because it taps off militants who could play a salutary political role if they were oriented toward helping to develop motion to-

ward mass protest action.

I didn't have time to comment in the report on the Carmichael aspect of this question, which was raised in the discussion. I think it is a very important thing to note, and I'm going to take this opportunity to say a few things about it. The point was made that Carmichael's line -- advocating refusal to be drafted as a policy among Negro militants -- is not in a complete sense a pacifist line. I think that's correct. I agree that the pacifist implications are not the whole of the matter. Another aspect of it is a desire to try to get something going within the Negro movement in opposition to the draft. But it falls in the same broad category of substituting individual action for the development of mass action, as does the line of the pacifists. What is Carmichael doing? He's traveling around the country today making speeches at every opportunity advocating that Negro militants refuse to submit to the draft. Under the present circumstances this can result only in stimulating isolated actions by black militants who, as individuals, are going to get wound up in the same kind of rhubarbs with the draft boards that pacifists do, as individuals. So, even though there is a difference in the motive, the end result tends to be the same. Just as the line of the pacifists, on the question of individual resistance to the capitalist draft, tends to tap off militants from participation in the development of mass action; Carmichael's line is going to have a similar effect at this juncture with respect to the Negro movement. That is not a correct line. Opposition to the draft within the Negro movement has to proceed on a more organized basis, one attuned to realistic possibilities of developing mass opposition. We need to pay close attention to this aspect of the problem, as well as that of pacifism as such. In this instance, both with regard to the Negro movement and the antiwar movement.

Another problem -- a lesser one than the individualistic forms of action -- is adventurous attempts to substitute a handful for the mass in opposing the draft. We've seen a few abortive attempts in that direction, like the gimmick that was thought up a few months ago about organizing such actions on college campuses. We must take a firm stand against such adventurous efforts to initiate instant-action against the draft. At the same time we must be careful to avoid giving the appearance that we're not concerned about the draft. In the last analysis that requires close attention to the political linking of our opposition to the draft with our whole opposition to the war.

On the matter of "new left" politics: Comrade Edwards raised a question that was appropriate -- is there a way to intervene? We never are content simply to project our propaganda toward any section of the movement, or any tendency within it. We always look to see if there is some realistic way we can intervene. So, it's correct to put that question. I

gathered from his prefatory remarks that he did so within a framework of essential agreement with the basic appraisal of "new left" politics outlined in the political report. Briefly described, the "new left" tendency remains tied to class collaborationist politics, operating at the present juncture within the two-party system. If it broke with the two-party setup, it would in the circumstances described in the political report, move in the direction of an attempt to form a third capitalist party. Taking that as a premise then, on the two facets of Comrade Edwards' question, I think the answers have to be rather obvious.

One was: Is there a basis for united action with this tendency? I see a basis for united action only so far as they are part of the antiwar movement, and insofar as that united action remains within the framework of our single-issue approach within the antiwar movement. In other words, united front action on the basis of minimal agreement on a given broadly-supported line of opposition to the war. On that we can continue to collaborate with them just as we do with anybody else on a principled basis within the antiwar movement.

Is there any basis for united action with them on the political plane? I say, "categorically no." We cannot have a united action with them on the political plane, unless there is a definite basis for the action to lead in the direction of a break with capitalist politics. There is no basis for that, and therefore, no basis whatever for united action on a political plane with the "new left" politicians within the antiwar movement.

The other question Comrade Edwards put was: Can we work inside this "new left" formation? Here I would say that there is something we can do and something we cannot under any circumstances undertake to do. In order to give an answer I would modify somewhat the question, "can we work inside?" It's an amorphous tendency that's trying to draw in antiwar militants looking for a meaningful course of political action in the fight against war. From time to time there will be one and another kind of loosely-knit gathering they will hold, like the conference in Los Angeles that has been discussed here. On such specific occasions I would say: Yes, we can intervene at that particular moment provided, as was the case in Los Angeles, that we intervene with our line. Not on the basis that we perceive something in the wind that represents a break with capitalist politics. We intervene with our line, counterposing the need for a break with capitalist politics to "new left" attempts to sucker antiwar militants into support of a modified form of the same old thing -- class collaborationist politics.

But there's no basis for our undertaking to work inside this formation in the sense that comrades would function there through identification with the formation. As on the question of attempting united action with them on the political plane, this could only imply that we think there's something viable there, among

the engineers of this formation, in terms of our basic approach to class politics. There's no basis whatever for that. As Comrade Halstead noted, what is basic to the injection of "new left" politics into the antiwar movement is an attempt to turn the movement into Democratic party channels, using the pretext that it is the way the movement can intensify the fight against the war. In short, it's a somewhat modified form, with some new faces, of the same old business that's been pumped into the movement since the year one by the Stalinists. It is a problem that has been basic to our work in the antiwar movement from the outset; it is a problem that will remain with us until the working class begins to move in the direction of a break with capitalist politics. Only then will there be a full class basis for the development of anti-capitalist political action.

Also to be kept in mind is the point Comrade DeBerry emphasized. The problem is a critical one within the Negro movement. As I noted in the political report, there are two wings within the black power tendency. One wing has not yet passed, in its political evolution, to the point where it sees the necessity for a break with capitalist politics. It is still looking for some new form of factional intervention inside the capitalist two-party system. The other wing, a smaller wing but a perceptible one, is developing consciousness of the need for a break with capitalist politics and is searching for ways and means in which to take that road. Here again, we must be very, very careful because -- in addition to the problems which would be created for us in the antiwar movement if we blurred over any lines of principle concerning "new left" politics -- it would compound our problems in trying to help along the anti-capitalist wing that is gestating within the black power tendency.

Comrade Lavan made an observation, in this general regard, that can't be emphasized and underlined too much. We try not to be sectarian; we try not to simply content ourselves with propagandizing, when there is an opportunity to intervene in another formation. Even so, we can't always avoid appearing sectarian in the eyes of militants who are eager for action and ready to grab the first thing that comes along, if it looks like a possibility for some new form of action. They don't bother to appraise it on the basis of whether or not it is a purposeful action that would work; as a matter of fact they are not yet sufficiently developed in their political consciousness to make that appraisal. It is basic to the mood among inexperienced militants, who get impatient for more results, to just try something new -- maybe it will work, maybe it won't; but try it. Comrade Warde for years has been lecturing us about the general methodology of this country, that is, pragmatism and empiricism. That is what confronts us among inexperienced militants in the antiwar movement. We just have to face the fact that, where questions of principle are involved, sometimes we're going to appear sectarian in the eyes of these militants and -- at the moment -- there isn't a thing we can do about it.

Concerning forms of political action, a question was raised in the discussion about the Dearborn referendum. If there is an opportunity here and there to push an appropriately worded question for referendum along the lines of the Dearborn case it will have a use value. In the present objective situation there are probabilities of a meaningful vote against the war policy in terms comparable to those of the 40% vote in Dearborn. It becomes another vehicle around which we can conduct certain concentrated forms of antiwar propaganda. But I want to emphasize the point Comrade Barnes made that it is even more important to look for opportunities in local elections next year to put forward party candidates as a continuing form of propaganda action around which to push our basic line. In the antiwar movement, at this juncture, we have to recognize that there is no realistic basis for the development of an anti-capitalist political tendency broader than ourselves. Within the movement we must keep pressing for confrontations by the militants with the capitalist government and, in the process, strive to recruit them to our ranks.

In conclusion I want to say a few words about our problems in the mass movement as a whole; that is, the antiwar movement, the Negro struggle, and the trade union movement. In every sphere, at this political conjuncture, we're confronted with seemingly no end of contradictory situations. It's just in the nature of things at this stage of objective developments on the American political scene. The consequence is that we have, and will continue to have, some complex tactical problems. You can't devise any rule of thumb for the solution of these problems. You can't lay down, at any given moment, exactly what will be the appropriate decision on a tactical problem that may not arise until later on. We'll have to handle those on a work-a-day basis. That does not imply empiricist, pragmatist methods in handling tactical problems. Remember always that our tactical line is subordinate to our strategic aim. All tactical decisions must be made within the framework of our strategic aim and basic to our strategic aim is the end objective of the whole transitional program -- the mobilization of the masses, led by the working class, in a struggle for power to abolish capitalism and reorganize society on a socialist basis. From that stems our main strategic line which determines our approach to specific tactical decisions. I said there is no rule of thumb for deciding tactics, and there is also no mechanical application of the rule of precedent. Let's not make the mistake Meany made of looking back to World War II to find the ready answer to a new threat of anti-strike laws in 1967.

The essence of our strategic line which lays down the fundamental criteria for our tactical decisions, I would sum up as follows: Our object at all times is to project our line propagandistically, and to watch constantly for opportunities to link up with the masses in action, in whatever forms the struggle itself may provide, that will help to impel the masses toward an anti-capitalist mood and consciousness. Toward that

end, in our propoganda and in our interventions, we advance our transitional demands. We press at all times, in all spheres and in all possible ways, for confrontations by the masses with the capitalist government, and for a challenge of all the lackeys of the capitalist government within the mass movement. Within that framework we look always for the most realistic pegs, the most convincing angles, the most appropriate wedges, with which to further open the minds of the militants in the mass movement. Our central immediate aim is to promote realization of the need to make a clean break with capitalist politics and take the road of independent anti-capitalist political action. Wherever motion within any significant section of the mass movement develops in that direction, we link up with it. While using the necessary tactical flexibility, we remain carefully attentive to maintaining our principles in the process.

Pending such developments, there is only one place where militants, who are becoming radical in their thinking, can enter what is really an anti-capitalist political formation. That's our movement -- youth and party. Until there is motion of this kind in the mass movement, that's the only place you can organize militants for independent anti-capitalist political action. Even when such action begins to develop in the mass movement, we will both participate within the developing anti-capitalist mass formations and, as we do at all times, strive to recruit militants into our ranks. As we build our fractions in the mass formations, we thereby develop a conscious socialist wing to carry the struggle forward.

In brief, these are the essentials of the strategic line of approach to all of our work in this period. While we can't make an arbitrary decision in advance on the nuances of day-by-day tactical problems, keep always carefully in mind that every tactical decision must fit within the framework of this strategic line. Tactics are not an entity unto themselves. Tactics are simply an instrumentality whereby we strive to implement our strategic line.

November 19, 1966

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