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TWO METHODS OF PARTY BUILDING: TROTSKY VS.
PIERRE FRANK

by Joe Soares, Atlanta Branch

Pierre Frank's most recent contribution to the international discussion entitled, "Two Ways of Constructing the Revolutionary Marxist Party and Engaging It in Action," has hopefully dispelled any illusions that fence-straddlers on the European question may have held.

The title alone established that the issue in dispute is the methodology to be employed in party building. This methodological dispute has been at the heart of the international discussions concerning both Latin America and Europe. The Leninist-Trotskyist Faction has repeatedly singled this out, from its declaration of tendency to the adoption on its faction platform of J. Hansen's document, "The Underlying Differences in Method." We pointed out that when everyone can agree on the general analysis, yet the conclusions drawn concerning concrete tasks are opposite, antagonistic methods are being employed. From their perspective, both Germain and Frank have given recognition to this by their attempts through implication and fraud to create a case of alleged SWP "centrism."

Without the question of methodology being cleared up, there will be no peace for the International. However, Germain, Frank and Maitan can relax. For a methodological solution we propose no religious revelations. The road to Leninist methodology is found through practice. A reversal of the Ninth World Congress turn and an international leadership that guards against its repetition are the prerequisites for a return to the Leninist method of party building. It is for these reasons, and to avoid a split, that the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction was formed.

FRANK'S METHOD

Frank's article is the weak product of distortions and false arguments. Sad to say, one of its clearest spots is his defense of isolated terrorism with almost typical "Weatherman" logic. That point will have to be taken up later.

Are We Against Continental Resolutions?

He starts out his case against Mary-Alice Waters' criticism of the European document by trying to prove that the SWP is in principle opposed to continental resolutions. We receive a lecture on "What sense would there then be in documents like 'Dynamics of World Revolution Today?'" He strays so far from her point that he ends up chiding us for implying support to the Stalinist position against the slogan of "A United Socialist States of Europe." The powers of debate he holds!

Let's start over again with Comrade Waters' real position. Nowhere in her consistent document is there a trace of opposition to continental resolutions. Comrade Waters begins by stating that "this is a welcome and much needed discussion"—a trick no doubt that Frank sees right through! She then proceeds to list the problems with the European document which "tries to develop a single continental *orientation* to cover more than 15 countries as different from one another as Finland . . . [and] Greece. This method of deriving a *tactical orientation* is wrong and unrealistic. It repeats one of the fundamental *methodological*

errors of the Latin American resolution . . . the prescribing of a *tactical orientation on a continental scale.*" (Emphasis added.)

Anyone with clear eyes can see that what we are opposed to is not resolutions, but rather the methodology of tactical schemes that are laid down as continental orientations. Consider our arguments over Latin America that Comrade Waters referred to. There, we oppose not the tactic of guerrilla war, but the strategical strait-jacket imposed on the sections to employ it regardless of the local situation and level of mass struggle.

PERSPECTIVES, ORIENTATION, AND TIME

Comrade Frank proceeds to once "again and always" engage in false polemics. To believe him, we care nothing about considerations of time, perspective, and orientation. We simply engage our forces in the same routine, irrespective of the situation.

Wrong. It is precisely that kind of rigid routine or magical formula that we are opposed to. Comrade Waters observes that the European document projects a mechanical timetable (4 to 5 years) in which the decisive battles with capitalism will be won, or the historic punishment of fascism will be upon us. From this prophecy, a magical "tactic" is rigidly projected for everyone all across Europe as the road to salvation. This "tactic" is the transformation of the new mass vanguard into an adequate instrument for leading the revolution. We are not opposed to perspectives and timing; we use them all the time. What we are opposed to is a fixed historical schedule.

The Innovation

With Frank's usual accuracy, he misses the point Waters is making about the innovation of voting on such "tactics" as whether or not we can massively, organically grow. Under this section, he goes off on a further tangent about time. So let's see what the real "innovation" is.

The European document projects three tactics for party building that aren't tactics at all: massive organic growth, deep entryism, or the transformation of the new mass vanguard. The one they prescribe for victory—the transformation of the new mass vanguard—is either counterposed to one of the other "tactics" they rejected, or a liquidationist plan for the Trotskyist movement.

The only principled "transformation" that could take place between Trotskyists and the new mass vanguard is one of massive, organic recruitment of this vanguard to our principled program *for our transformation into mass parties*. This is a course that is explicitly rejected by the European document, so one must assume that the course projected is one of adaptionist paralysis and liquidation for the sections. All in the finest methodological traditions of that great schematist, Pablo. (I would recommend reading Cliff Conner's article on "Deep Entryism," *SWP Discussion Bulletin*, Vol. 31, No. 31, p. 43, for an excellent examination of the methodological similarities between the Pablo fight and the current discussion.)

Party Pragmatism?

For good measure, Frank interjects a point on pragmatism. To him, "an action that would be solely 'in accordance with the immediate situation of our actual forces' would be pragmatism, a quite dangerous pragmatism." This comment is totally consistent with his method.

Shall we disregard the local situation and our resources and launch a civil war with 12 people in Bolivia "for the masses"? After all, our analysis of the specificity of Latin American conditions *demand*s such a course. Perish the party, but long live anti-pragmatism!

Chaos

From this point on, total confusion reigns. First, Frank reaches into his "big brochure" of Trotsky quotes and proves, as the Stalinists did long ago, that quotes can be made to serve any argument. He then attempts to prove that the interests of the "new improved" vanguard are really what the masses should concern themselves with. This section is followed by one on "How the Ox Lays an Egg," which turns out to be a terrorist. Egg in hand, Frank surfaces for one entire clear passage in defense of minority terrorism.

Terrorism

On page 10, there is such a blatant and weak attempt to defend terrorism that one can hardly believe one's eyes. Just sentences before, he wrote reassuringly that he was nowhere near an ultraleft deviation. "They would be poor revolutionary Marxist leaders who let themselves be automatically dragged along by the 'logic' dreaded by Comrade Mary-Alice!"

For once Pierre Frank has hit the nail on the head.

On the very next page, in reference to the bombings of the Argentine Embassy and the American firm, Honeywell-Bull in France, he sighs, "one can simply regret that there weren't more of them and more vigorous ones." His lame logic is that "one cannot always summon up mass demonstrations" and that these actions weren't divorced from the mass struggle because they were "related to the needs of the Vietnamese masses." For orthodoxy, an out of context Trotsky quote is thrown in.

Comrades! What ever happened to the French mass struggle?

Should we have bombed Peruvian embassies when Hugo Blanco was in prison? Or should we, as we did, launch a mass political campaign for his release? If there are any doubts, one could ask Blanco. He is alive and still a Trotskyist, unlike the PRT. Should we have bombed plane factories during the war or should we have organized political demonstrations and strikes against the imperialist involvement in Vietnam? To ask these questions was once sufficient to answer them.

Yet, here we have an old dog learning new tricks.

P. S.: June 21

The action that can clear up so much confusion over method and the European resolution receives a P. S. from Frank. This action will have to be seriously dissected if the debate is to proceed along objective lines, and not preconceived subjective schemes. The facts of what happened need to be laid down alongside the Trotskyist record on combating fascism. A balance sheet must be drawn.

For their part, the French comrades must write down a factual description of the course of events and then explain their intentions. From here, we can begin the balance sheet by considering the information already available on the Trotskyist experience with fascism.

At this point, it appears that the League, independent of the labor movement, attempted to "smash fascism in the egg" by physically breaking up a fascist rally. Little other information is available except for Alain Krivine's contradictory interview that appeared in the *Intercontinental Press*. I say contradictory because when you examine Krivine's words carefully, there are really two different voices speaking: (1) "We do not think we can take power by hitting the police one by one with molotov cocktails . . . only mass action can put an end to the fascist gangs. . . ." (2) "But you cannot avoid your responsibilities. As long as it is not too late fascism can be crushed in the egg . . . and since the traditional workers and democratic organizations have failed to assume their responsibilities, the revolutionaries had to do it. . . . We resort to violence on a minority basis when we are forced to. . . . We have shown the way."

In order to best comprehend Krivine's tones, the League's innovative tactics, and whatever other material that might come to light, we should first assimilate the lessons of the past.

There is a rich storehouse of Trotskyist experience with fascism to draw upon, ranging from Germany and France to the collaboration between the SWP and Trotsky in 1939 to fight the pre-war American fascist movement. An account of our 1939 fight with fascism and the resolution it produced were printed in the August 3, 1973, issue of *The Militant*. The article and resolution are excellent, clear statements of the Trotskyist method for dealing with fascism.

Their main points are worth summarizing:

1. A profound transformation had just taken place making fascism a serious mass movement on the rise. This rendered inadequate the previous simple measures of combating fascism mainly through propaganda. (Was this the case in France?)

2. The fascist movement immediately placed in danger the lives and liberties of the workers.

3. The bourgeoisie and their state can in no way be relied upon to defend labor.

4. The workers must totally rely on themselves and create workers defense guards.

5. These guard units must develop out of the labor movement. The unions must be forced into taking the initiative. Where they won't, we must pressure them through agitation, demonstrations, and modest example. We should, if necessary, try to set an example for reluctant unions by reaching out and forming an "embryo of the guard." But this skeleton must in no way consider itself a real defense guard and attempt to substitute its actions for that of the masses.

6. *Concerning fascist rallies, we organized counterdemonstrations that were protected by defense guards against a fascist disruption. We never attacked a fascist rally.*

The SWP's method, worked out in collaboration with Trotsky, is characterized by revolutionaries taking the initiative to mobilize the masses through their own organizations to defend themselves. The posture is consistently defensive. The art of defensive politics is an old

lesson for Trotskyists. It started with the "defensive" October revolution.

Next, we could examine "Whither France?" The book's context is one of a prerevolutionary situation in France around 1936. There was a critical absence of revolutionary leadership which was laying the basis for fascism to walk in on top of CP and SP betrayals.

What was Trotsky's advice? He called upon revolutionaries to take the initiative in building a united front of action to mobilize millions. He said that the masses could only be mobilized through their unions and parties; certainly not against them. A workers militia must be built and "The fundamental cadres of the militia must be the factory workers grouped according to their place of work."¹

There is no difference in method when compared with the SWP's 1939 fight. But concerning France, Trotsky did have one extra point of added emphasis that he didn't need to stress to the SWP: in order to do any of this you need a party.

Trotsky spent over one-fifth of his space on "Why the Fourth International?" in the article, "Once Again, Whither France?" Trotsky is very firm on this question. He tells the weakhearted that in a prerevolutionary situation, a nucleus can "organically grow" into a mass party, provided it stands firm. "We should be firm opponents of fusion with an opportunist party. Under the conditions of the sharpened social crisis, the revolutionary party, in a struggle against reformism, would *unquestionably* rally under its banner the overwhelming majority of the workers."² (My emphasis.)

Unfortunately, Trotsky couldn't foresee comrades voting against massive growth or voting in favor of fusion with the new mass vanguard under the magical words of "transformation" and "adequate instrument."

Concerning those who felt it was too late to build a party to fight against the fascist threat, he said, "To build a revolutionary party in this, the least favorable variant, is to bring nearer the hour of vengeance. The wise-aces who shy away from the *unpostponable* task with the words, 'the conditions are not yet mature' merely reveal that they themselves have not matured for the conditions."³ (My emphasis.) This section is closed with the words, "Victory is conceivable only on the basis of the methods of Bolshevism." The SWP has no dispute with Trotsky.

Party Building – Trotsky's and the SWP's Method

Pierre Frank's caricature of the SWP's method of party building is only out-done by his clique of lawyers in the USA. To them our method is one of party building in the abstract and the creation of an organizational bureaucracy. Docilely the old SWP slugs along recruiting, consuming money, and putting jet-setters on full time to spare them the vicissitudes of survival in the real world—all irrespective of time, tasks, perspective, strategy, and tactics.

Now let's return to the "real world."

The party's record in the antiwar movement is a perfect case of timing, strategy, and tactics. Back in 1965, we "foresaw" the opportunities and tasks before us and immediately, with a *principled line*, set out to win over the vanguard and the masses. We utilized the tactic of united front type coalitions for antiwar demonstrations. Timing was of the utmost importance for calling demonstrations and strikes. All of the factors, from the Soviet backdown

during the mining and bombing escalation to the election years, were taken into consideration.

Our strategic orientation of party building was adhered to. We emerged many times larger; and, starting as only one of many "old left" groupings in 1965 amongst the thriving New Left, we arose through the New Left wreckage as the radical organization heading toward dominance on the left. Frank and Germain know all of this. It has only been since his scramble for ammunition that falsifications of our antiwar history have been appearing.

We didn't accomplish this by adaptation to the "new mass vanguard" or through having two lines—one for the stupid masses and the other for the enlightened vanguard. The real vanguard is only won in the fight for the correct mass line. A two-line approach is a miscarriage. It represents a petty-bourgeois contempt for the masses' ability to understand or to be mobilized. Show us one example of Trotsky advocating a "regular" and a "highest" line for struggle. This is what he had to say during the Spanish Civil War: "Even is one should *run ahead and assume* that the proletarian vanguard has grasped the idea that only the dictatorship of the proletariat can save Spain from further decay, *the preparatory problem would nevertheless remain in full force*: to weld around the vanguard the heterogeneous sections of the working class. . . ." ⁴ (My emphasis.) Or, as Lenin would say, "to patiently explain."

At any given time, there can only be one correct line. A demonstration could be correct today, a strike tomorrow. What's the sense in timing and tactics at all if two lines are both right?

Frank's and My School of Trotsky Quotes

Repeatedly, we are baited for our aversion to pretending that we can exactly foresee the future course of events. And because of this strange agnosticism, we refuse to support magical formulas or rigid tactical orientations. But this adversity is simple Trotskyist common sense. Our position is that you can only generally foresee the future course of events; hence it is necessary to have the greatest tactical flexibility and innovation, rearming the party at each separate turn. Joe Hansen has warned that the wrong tactic can affect the strategical line and eventually seriously damage the party. Is this so new?

Frank uses his Trotsky quotes from the "big brochure" to prove his points about timing and orientation. I, too, can master any number of quotes from Trotsky. The difference between Frank's and my quotes is that I remain true to Trotsky's method and intent. The placement of any of these in their proper context will tell you that:

"Without correct tactics, the best strategy may lead to ruin. Of course, to guess the tempo far in advance is impossible. The tempo must be examined in the course of the struggle, making use of the most varied indicators."⁵

Concerning timetables: "These lines gave the Stalinists an excuse—after the event, of course—to speak of incorrect prognosis. People who have themselves foreseen nothing demand of others *not a Marxist prognosis but theosophic forecasts about the day and the form events will take place*: this is the manner in which the ignorant and the superstitious sick demand miracles of medicine. The task of a Marxist prognosis is *to help orient our ideas in the general direction of developments* and to help forearm us against surprises."⁶ (My emphasis.)

Pablo would no doubt justify the disastrous results of deep entryism on the false war-revolution prognosis. Never could this pedant realize that deep entryism itself was and will always remain wrong. The PRT also proved that with its tactical scheme it wasn't ready for the "surprise" of legal openings.

If we mechanically raise a slogan from our program like "workers control," at the wrong time, we are only seeing part of the reality. Our slogans become obstacles.

"To counterpose the slogan of *arming the workers* to the reality of the political processes that grip the masses at their vitals means to isolate oneself from the masses — and the masses from arms."⁷

Frank wants us to ready-make organs of dual power for the masses. Yet, "We cannot force soviets on the workers at any desired moment; still less can we force upon the people the soviets that the proletariat will create only in the future. In the meantime, it is necessary to answer today's questions."⁸

Lastly, on the subject of our abstract worship of such party tasks as selling the press, recruiting, and strengthening our organization, Trotsky had this to say to the Spanish Trotskyists in the middle of the civil war.

"The fact that the Spanish comrades adhering to the Left Opposition have not yet established their own press is an inexcusable waste of time and the revolution will not leave it unpunished. . . . We must assemble the forces of the Left Opposition throughout the country, establish a journal and a bulletin. . . ."⁹

"In politics, above all during the revolution, only those conquests are important which are translated into the growth of the party."¹⁰

"For a successful solution of all these tasks, three conditions are required: a party; once more a party; again a party!"¹¹

These seven quotes run the risk of degenerating the argument into a school of quotations, but as Frank employs this method, I took the opportunity to demonstrate that one must learn Trotsky's message and not simply memorize his words.

Our Crisis of Leadership

Currently, we are facing possibly the greatest crisis the Fourth International has yet seen. The differences over strategical orientation (i.e., magical formulas vs. party building) and the growth of secret factions and cliques are all only manifestations of this crisis. The root of our real problem is the immaturity and backwardness of some of our "international leaders." Our crisis is a manifestation of the inability of some sections to develop real central leadership teams.

Cannon pointed to the dimensions of this problem during the not unsimilar Cochran fight. In his speech entitled, "Factional Struggle and Party Leadership," he brought out that the question of the party leadership is the central problem to be solved once the question of program is settled. Given the program, we will still come to naught if our parties aren't capable of throwing up real, solid, collaborative leadership teams. "The leading cadre plays the same decisive role in relation to the party that the party plays in relation to the class."¹²

Without a real leadership team that guarantees continuity of the Leninist method, no number of intellectual feats will compensate when the political crisis of "what next?" comes knocking. Stars trained in the Pablo school of organizational maneuvers and tactical schemes will never be able to lead us out of our dilemma.

France, England, and Italy (to name only the highlights) will never become real parties until they master their leadership crises. This doesn't mean, however, that there should be demotions. A team means necessarily a balance of cadres. Our strength lies in combinations; what we need is the construction of real teams. The road to this is through the factional struggle of the Leninist-Trotskyists.

Only through *this* method of *open*, principled political struggle can a real proletarian leadership be constructed.

This was the only scheme that Trotsky believed in: "You will see for yourselves. Armed with Marxist theory and Leninist revolutionary method, you will find your road by yourselves."¹³

October 22, 1973

FOOTNOTES

1. *Whither France?* by Leon Trotsky, Merit Publishers, 1968 page 31.

2. *Ibid.*, page 107.

3. *Ibid.*, page 137.

4. *The Spanish Revolution 1931-39*, by Leon Trotsky, Pathfinder Press, page 80.

5. *Ibid.*, page 129.

6. *Ibid.*, page 113.

7. *Ibid.*, page 117.

8. *Ibid.*, page 118.

9. *Ibid.*, page 134.

10. *Ibid.*, page 387.

11. *Ibid.*, page 88.

12. *Speeches to the Party*, by James P. Cannon, Pathfinder Press, page 183.

13. *The Spanish Revolution 1931-39*, by Leon Trotsky, Pathfinder Press, page 63.

THE LIGUE COMMUNISTE IN THE LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS

by Brad Merrill, Brooklyn Branch, New York Local

Supporters of the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction say that the line projected by the IEC majority in Europe is a search for substitutes both for the leadership of the Leninist party and for the leadership of the Leninist party and for the action of the masses. The Ligue Communiste, the second-largest section of the Fourth International, is today providing the central leadership and the driving force of the IEC Majority "Tendency." It is safe to assume that they understand the line of the European Perspectives document as well as anyone and that their practice represents that line in action.

In the 1973 French legislative elections, the Ligue Communiste called for votes in the first round for candidates who were opposed to the reformist electoral road to socialism and who were "supporters of the revolutionary road" to socialism. ("The Mote and the Beam," IIDB Vol. X, No. 8, p. 15), and in the second round for the candidates of the Union of the Left.

The Union of the Left represented an opening to the right by the French CP and SP. They dangled its pro-capitalist program before the bourgeois parties. The central goal of the Union of the Left was to draw in such parties and administer capitalism in common with them in a coalition government. They found only one taker at this juncture, the relatively insignificant but thoroughly bourgeois Left Radicals.

The Political Committee of the SWP wrote a letter to the Political Bureau of the Ligue critical of both decisions. The reply to these criticisms, titled "The Mote and the Beam," was not only a reply but also a partial balance sheet of the electoral activity of the Ligue, and a summary of their electoral policy. This document begins to lay bare the mutually contradictory conceptions that the Ligue is trying to generalize throughout Europe.

The SWP letter was not an abstract criticism of the Ligue. The Ligue is in a position to use elections to address broad layers of the French population with the Trotskyist program, and its leaders were well aware of this. The decision to run Alain Krivine, their best known spokesperson, for president in 1969, was an indication that they were willing to make a considerable effort to get the attention of the broadest layers.

In "The Mote and the Beam," they seem to agree that the Union of the Left was an attempt to create a class-collaborationist electoral formation by the CP and SP. They seem to hold that this attempt failed because of the lack of interest of the main sections of the bourgeoisie in such an idea.

They write: ". . . To base a campaign around stating that the leaders of the CP and SP are seeking alliance with the bourgeois parties would miss the real problem that the creation of the Union of the Left pretends to resolve: How to make the transition to socialism? That is why we have placed at the center of our campaign the following question: Electoral road or revolutionary road to socialism? And it is also for this reason that we would have liked to have formed a bloc of candidates

supporting the revolutionary road to confront the Union of the Left." (*Ibid.*, p. 13.)

But there is a further step from this appreciation of the elections to their reasons for the second-round vote.

"The March 1973 elections would not, of course, have done anything to change the social system; but their results that is, the composition of the National Assembly, could have very important consequences. If a Union of the Left majority had emerged from the elections, . . ." etc. (*Ibid.*) Hence, the Ligue felt it was important to try to influence the outcome of the elections by supporting the Union of the Left.

Leaving aside, for the moment, all other criticisms of the Ligue's electoral policy, I see a dramatic and serious contradiction in the two quotes above. The Ligue, in an election where it posed opposition to the electoralism of the Union of the Left, later called on the French electorate to vote *for* the Union of the Left. They decided that a Union of the Left victory would outweigh the miseducation involved in convincing the workers to vote for an incipient popular front formation.

Now, when the SWP participates in elections, we constantly point out to the masses that the mere act of voting has no decisive effect on the issues of struggles that face the working class. They can provide a certain very rough gauge of the ability of the working class to exert its will through proletarian methods of struggle. Above all, they can be used in the struggle to break down the illusions of the class and its potential allies in the bourgeois parties and politicians—and in the reformist parties and politicians that ally with the bourgeoisie. Still, any change that results from the election is a *reflection*—more or less accurate—of the struggles, the combativity, or the threat of independent struggle by the working class.

With that in mind, the vanguard party—if it is to act like a vanguard—will not call on the workers or their allies to vote for an electoral combination that is based on the search for an alliance with the bourgeoisie to defend the bourgeois state. The Union of the Left was no alliance of workers parties. From the start, its program and appeals were aimed at winning sectors of the bourgeoisie, and it attempted to educate the workers under its influence in this class-collaborationist spirit. The ready acceptance of the bourgeois Left Radicals, though not decisive in itself, was one clear example of this. They aimed for big fish, but settled for minnows. The character of the coalition was determined by this goal.

We know class-collaborationist formations like the Union of the Left inspire the masses with the illusory goal of an "electoral road" to socialism only in order to carry out their goal of preserving and defending capitalism. A working-class party of the petty-bourgeois type, like the CP or the SP, that allies with the bourgeoisie to defend the bourgeois state in such a bloc, abandons proletarian means of struggle, subordinates itself to a bourgeois program, and promises in advance to subordinate proletarian needs to its bourgeois partners and the bourgeois state.

Thus class-collaborationist combinations like the Union of the Left represent a step away from the Trotskyist demand that the petty-bourgeois workers parties break with the capitalists and take power in their own right.

We do not allow the class-collaboration of a working-class formation's leadership to confuse us about the character of a union or a Communist Party. But we, as a central part of our program, attack the class-collaborationist *activities* of the misleadership. We could support the candidates of the Socialist Party or Communist Party (especially on the second round), using bitterly critical support to win workers to the idea of an independent struggle for power. But we not only attack, we demonstratively separate ourselves from coalitions that are *only* instruments of class collaboration. The clearest example of this is a coalition government where working-class misleaders hold government posts—even the top ones—and subordinate the struggle of the working class to bourgeois "legality." We *oppose* such governments, propose our total revolutionary program as an alternative, and propose demands that will break the masses from that government.

History has shown that in elections, and within the bourgeois state, the subordination of a proletarian party to a bourgeois program often takes a form that we have labeled "popular front," a name used by the Stalinists for their class-collaborationist operations in the thirties, and a name which they are reviving today. The French comrades insist that it is a bit early to call the Union of the Left a popular front because the big bourgeoisie is not in it yet. I think that the important thing to note is that this formation is not a working-class formation in its base like the CP and SP. It is an alliance of the petty-bourgeois, class-collaborationist leaders of these organizations aimed at channelling the proletariat, turning it away from independent struggles, giving it confidence in bourgeois parties and institutions, and coalescing with the bourgeoisie. In exchange, the working class is offered some version of the pipe-dream "peaceful road to socialism."

The Ligue, when it identifies the Union of the Left as representing the "electoral road" seems to agree in part with this analysis, but it fails to note that an "alliance with the bourgeoisie" is exactly the *heart* of the peaceful road to socialism, counterposed to the independent class struggle that can win immediate struggles and lead to the overturn of capitalism. There is no contradiction between attacking the "peaceful road" and attacking working-class leaders of the CP and SP for seeking an alliance with the bourgeoisie. There is nothing pacifist about using an election to draw the class line.

Attacking class collaboration is in fact the exact way to begin an attack on the peaceful road chimera, especially when we note that the Union of the Left plainly exhibits its desire for bourgeois allies when it discusses the immediate struggles of the workers.

Rouge quoted the "common program" of the Union of the Left on democracy in the workplace in its February 10 issue. *Rouge* counterposed real proletarian control to the Union of the Left's program which states, "The factory and workplace committees and the personnel delegates . . . must be consulted on all decisions involving hiring and firing, distribution of positions, trans-

fers, classification of workers, setting of the work pace, . . . Implementation of these decisions shall be held in abeyance until agreement among all concerned parties."

Rouge stated, "In previous issues, we have stressed all the ambiguities of these formulations. Suppose, as is inevitable, that the 'parties concerned' fail to 'reach agreement.' Then who makes the decision?" (Reprinted in *IP*, March 5, 1973, p. 239.)

This sort of criticism by the Ligue in the pages of *Rouge* does not indicate that the "electoral" question ought to have been posed primarily in the rather abstract formula, "Electoral road or revolutionary road to socialism?" Rather, the Ligue should have posed the question of class-collaboration in the concrete, as in the issue above, and put this in the center of its campaign. Here we had the CP, through the Union of the Left, calling for subordination of workers control to the "agreement" of the bosses. The next paragraph of the Ligue article summarizes: "The common program implicitly concedes that the employer will decide." (*Ibid.*, p. 239.)

From the Ligue's own organ, it was apparent that the Union of the Left was seeking a governmental coalition with the bourgeoisie. It is also clear that the question of the electoral road could have been posed, not abstractly while electorally supporting a class-collaborationist front, but concretely by attacking class collaboration on countless issues. Such issues would have been more concrete than debates over "roads to socialism," at least for the French workers. The demand (especially in the second round) that the CP and SP break with the bourgeoisie—while continuing to attack their programs—could also have played a useful role in educating radicalizing workers. Support to the Union of the Left obviated or contradicted such propaganda.

There was a reason why the Ligue made the center of the campaign against the Union of the Left the question of the "peaceful road or revolutionary road." These exist a number of young workers and students in France who are leaders in struggles, outside the traditional workers organizations, who are aware of the world revolution, support Vietnam, defend Cuba, etc. They have a general idea that imperialism exists and are aware of some of its activities. They know there is a ruling class that oppresses and exploits. And they have understood, from watching the Vietnamese and the Cubans, that capitalism will not depart peacefully from the scene. It will be necessary to overturn it and that process will involve violence. In general, these youth follow the far-left organizations that claim to agree on this one point. The Ligue hoped to gather them up by offering "a bloc of candidates supporting the revolutionary road to confront the Union of the Left." ("The Mote and the Beam," p. 13.) The Ligue forgot, for the moment, that there is more to the "revolutionary road" than the necessity for violent revolution—much more—and that this is the reason why Trotskyist parties must present their own program and not tag other programs as "revolutionary" because of an agreement on one point.

These young radicals have another weakness, among their many strengths and weaknesses. While often seeming to be quite clear on the need to use force in making a revolution (and very prone to ultraleft concepts about "stimulating" the masses through acts of "minority vio-

lence"), these youth often harbor illusions about class collaboration, heavily influenced by the class-collaborationist practices of Mao and the Vietnamese Stalinists. Most of them were quite excited about Allende for example. Hence, they had illusions about the Union of the Left. If the Ligue Communiste wanted to regroup them quickly, it was under heavy pressure to give way to this prejudice of the young radicals as well as the prejudice that violence in itself constituted the "revolutionary road" to socialism.

I don't want to suggest any hard-and-fast label for this error, but I would suggest that if this body of radicals is interested in allying with and joining the working-class struggle, it could best be reached by a Ligue Communiste policy that addressed itself to the class collaborationism of the Union of the Left on workers control, inflation, racism, and other issues. This would make the error of the class-collaborationist electoral road clear and concrete by relating it to the current struggles of the workers and raising appropriate immediate, democratic, and/or transitional demands that deepen the class struggle and show the need for class independence.

Without a policy of integrating attacks on class collaboration and the electoral road with presentation of appropriate demands for concrete struggles and issues, the counterposing of the "electoral" to the "revolutionary" road can confuse rather than clarify the class line. Such confusion was shown in the formation of the FRA in Bolivia, a class-collaborationist grouping with a "violent road" line. Under changed conditions, similar formations of "revolutionary" generals, police, and other supporters of bourgeois rule could appear in France, especially if the predictions in the European resolution of possible strong states or fascist takeovers were to prove correct.

The task of drawing the class line could have been accomplished if a Trotskyist electoral pole had been presented in the first round to attract the young radicals and to present our full program to the masses. The aim would be to programmatically and in action differentiate ourselves from the far-left organizations, as well as from the CP and SP. The Trotskyist electoral pole would have to fight for a transitional program counterposed to class-collaborationist approaches, and counterposed also to anyone who proposed a minimal electoral policy around the "revolutionary road to socialism," interpreted merely as an armed road rather than as the totality of a revolutionary approach.

In "The Mote and the Beam," the only openly stated reason for supporting the Union of the Left in the second round was, as noted earlier, ". . . but their results, that is, the composition of the National Assembly, could have very important political consequences." This is a real pink herring.

I would like to return to the *Rouge* article, which dealt extensively with the possible results of the elections, to show why.

"Of all the possible variants, one seems to us to be almost completely out of the question: the pure and simple return to the status quo. All indications are that the majority [UDR, the Gaullists] will suffer some kind of defeat . . . two possibilities must be considered. . . .

"[After a small defeat of the UDR, without a Union of the Left majority] . . . the government would be faced

with a rather hostile working class. The majority's electoral defeat, the relative strengthening of the Union of the Left, would in fact stimulate popular militancy. *This would be registered all the more firmly in struggles since all hopes of achieving change through the ballot box would have been disappointed and would become in any case a dead letter until 1976.*" (*IP*, March 5, 1973, p. 238.)

Here it seems that the French comrades expected to have it both ways. If the Gaullists and the reformers hold a small majority in parliament, the masses will be "stimulated" into action and simultaneously "disappointed" by their inability to do anything through the ballot.

And what if the Union of the Left wins a majority? The same thing would happen, say the French comrades. The Pompidou regime would, they predicted, "try to gain time through a whole series of stalling maneuvers. The ruling class and its state apparatus will use this time to provoke chaos and to turn the situation around.

"This refusal to submit to the 'verdict of universal suffrage' is very dangerous for the ruling class. It will do more to demystify legalism and bourgeois electoralism than 100,000 propaganda campaigns waged by the revolutionary far left. . . .

"These workers will seek to impose by direct action what they could not obtain by following the rules of the bourgeois game." (*Ibid.*, p. 239, all emphasis in original.)

The article makes many references to the tasks of revolutionists but they all follow the same chronology: after the elections, there will be a workers upsurge caused by either result and we will be back on the preferred ground of the class struggle, the streets and factories. It is clear that the outcome of the elections is more important for the class struggle than the real preparations for the struggles before, during, and after the elections, because, for the French comrades, the results of the Union of the Left campaign are the starting point for the next upsurge.

It seems that the French comrades outline a choice between A (the Union of the Left wins) and B (the Union of the Left loses), both of which lead to C (the workers upsurge). That, of course, is no choice at all, as revolutionists ought to have pointed out to purveyors of such schemas. Indeed, was the road to C aided by supporting the Union of the Left instead of following the method of the Transitional Program by fighting for the independence of the French workers? Weren't they deprived of a useful element in developing the class struggle: the independent program of the revolutionary party, based on *principles* and applied flexibly in concrete circumstances?

So what was the real reason for the vote for the Union of the Left in the second round? The comrades say that "everyone, including ourselves, would total the votes of the Ligue and Lutte Ouvriere to measure the impact of the far left." ("The Mote and the Beam," p. 14.) And they justify the vote for the Union of the Left because of its predicted impact on the class struggle—its inconsequential impact, if you examine the schema closely.

In both rounds, the real task of building an independent electoral pole and putting forward the relevant parts of our Transitional Program were allowed to drift, in favor of electoral gimmicks aimed at electoral impact that somebody thought, without examining their own logic, would heat up the class struggle.

Now, it is only natural to speculate on what the impact of an election will be in the class struggle. In 1972, our comrades in the U.S. debated whether the election of McGovern would heat up or cool down the class struggle. Different opinions were voiced. But, according to the logic of the Ligue, if we had decided that a McGovern victory would cause a political crisis in the USA, favorable to a working-class upsurge, the correct tactic would have been to support him.

But in our campaigns, we feel we win precisely because we attack the fraud of bourgeois politics wherever we find it. We win if we address the masses with a socialist program, if we take an approach toward the masses that young revolutionary minded people can be won to, and we win if we recruit to the party and the revolutionary socialist youth organization.

The only reasonable explanation for the gymnastics of the Ligue in the last elections is that it lost the class compass. It relied on objective forces, predictions, and speculations rather than the independent mass strength of the working class and the political capacities of its own cadres. It sought a coalition of the far left, whose "impact" would be measured in the first-round vote. It relied on the "impact" of the class-collaborationist Union of the Left. There is no absolute guarantee that the Ligue would have met

with greater success if it had oriented its campaign to the interests and activities of the working class and its potential allies and educated the vanguard in that spirit. That orientation however is a guarantee against unnecessary failures and programmatic disintegration that can be produced by empirically scrambling after speculative gains. The Ligue leaders say they refuse to treat class principles as a "stop sign." Most drivers get away with ignoring one stop sign. But to make a principle of ignoring stop signs will assure that your organization will be highly accident-prone.

It is important to remember, however, that not everything was negative in the Ligue's electoral campaign. As the Political Committee stated in its letter:

"In our opinion, the decision of the Ligue to enter a large slate of candidates in the elections and use the opportunity afforded by the campaign to present the program of the Ligue Communiste to broad layers of the working class was an extremely positive step. . . .

"Your ability to carry out a campaign of such large scope is a gauge of the advances the Fourth International has made towards the construction of a mass revolutionary Marxist party in France." ("Letter," IIDB, Vol. X, No. 14.)

November 21, 1973

AN EXCHANGE OF CORRESPONDENCE

by Les Evans, Brooklyn Branch, New York Local

[The following letter was submitted to the *International Socialist Review* at the end of November by two comrades in the YSA. In my opinion, it is of some interest in light of the positions put forward by the Internationalist Tendency on the nature of Stalinism. My reply explained the *ISR's* reasons for refusing to publish the letter. I am submitting this correspondence for the information of the party.]

December 3, 1973

* * *

To the editor:

In their response to a critical letter in the October *ISR* concerning their article on the Vietnamese Communist Party, Johnson and Feldman proudly point to the fact that if the VCP is not Stalinist by the criteria our movement has set up, neither are such parties as the Yugoslav and Chinese Communist parties. As many have made this point, Johnson and Feldman haven't really scored much of a coup. Still, it is an important point which we wish to deal with, as it demonstrates the sloppy methodology and sloppier historical accuracy of their article.

Let us consider the case of the Yugoslav CP. (First, let us say that the VCP and the Yugoslav party are by no means identical. We use the example of the Yugoslav CP to demonstrate the inadequate method of Feldman and Johnson.) It has long been a Trotskyist view that the YCP was able to carry out a socialist revolution in

Yugoslavia only by breaking sharply (if pragmatically) with basic tenets of Stalinism.

The question of the Stalinist two-stage theory of revolution is important here. Milovan Djilas, during the war the Partisan deputy commander, notes the following in his recent autobiography: ". . . Tito established a new thesis: the possibility of a direct Communist take-over of power, a denial of the need for the revolution to go through two-stages, the bourgeois-democratic and the proletarian, which had been the party's position until then. . . . It meant that we had abandoned the earlier schemes for a democratic and national revolution, as well as the idea of collaboration with allies in a transition period. . . . Tito spoke as a pragmatist, and not as a theoretician. Practice was gaining precedence over theory." While Djilas carefully avoids the implications of this "new" idea, he makes our point precisely. Stalin and his henchmen focused much of their attack on the YCP on their heresy in regard to the "omission" of the "democratic stage"; in reply, the YCP organ *Borba* (*Struggle*) noted on April 29, 1948, that ". . . these 'theories' of 'stages' and state capitalism in the new Yugoslavia are nothing else but a method of struggle against the building of socialism in our country." Tito stressed this point of departure from Stalinism in his speech to the YCP Fifth Congress in July, 1948: "We did not wish to halt half-way: to depose the King and abolish the monarchy and to come to power only to share it with representatives of the capitalist class, who would continue to exploit the working masses. . . . The working class did not want this, either. . . . So we

decided to forge boldly ahead with the complete liquidation of capitalism in Yugoslavia." The Yugoslavs themselves continue to stress the importance of this departure from Stalinist theory in achieving a revolutionary victory. The 1958 Program of the YCP, for example, stresses, "The National Liberation Struggle in Yugoslavia would not have been so stubborn and so successful if the Yugoslav working masses had not seen in it the perspective of victory not only over fascism but also over the old and hated bourgeois order in Yugoslavia, over a system of class exploitation and oppression." (Under pressure from Stalin, Tito did consent to include three bourgeois representatives—Subasic, Grol, and Sutej—in the Cabinet for a short period. The three resigned as soon as they concluded that they were to be given no responsibilities whatsoever. When Grol attempted to form a bourgeois party, he was met with the slogan "Ballots for Tito, bullets for Grol" and withdrew.)

The YCP opposed Stalin's strategies and orders throughout the war. Stalin objected fiercely when the YCP began to form Proletarian Brigades to lead the armed struggle, arguing that this was "ultraleft" and "narrowed the base of support" in the war. Mosa Pijade retorted that, on the contrary, they "guaranteed its revolutionary character." Stalin ordered the Partisans to use royalist insignia and to call for the return of King Peter; the Partisans instead fought under red stars and hammers and sickles and informed King Peter that if he returned they would hang him.

To its credit, when the breach between the YCP and Stalin's Cominform broke out in 1948, the Fourth International recognized the issues at stake. In an "Open Letter to the Congress, Central Committee, and Members of the Yugoslav Communist Party," issued by the International Secretariat on July 13, the point was made that the YCP had three choices before it: to capitulate to Stalin, to retire back into Yugoslavia, "repelling the attacks . . . and attempting to 'build socialism' in your own country, while concluding trade relations with the powers of Eastern Europe as well as with those of the imperialist West," or to join with Trotskyists in a new Leninist International. A statement by the NC of the SWP in the October 1949 issue of *Fourth International* went further. It noted that "Stalinist in origin and ideology, the Tito leadership has nevertheless been compelled by the logic of the struggle to question some of the fundamental premises on which Stalinism rests," adding that it was logical and predictable that the break "takes place at first on a primitive and limited basis, lacking in ideological clarity, programmatic firmness, and still adhering to many Stalinist conceptions." It did stress that such a break *had* taken place, however, and called Titoism a "new form of centrism."

Despite some fuzziness, these statements summarize adequately our conceptions concerning the development of the Yugoslav, Chinese and (especially) Vietnamese parties. Nor do we see any need to revise this analysis. The Fourth International reviewed the situation in regard to the YCP and outlined several courses of action; it took one of them—that of retreating into itself, pushing through a few reforms of one sort or another, and playing off the workers' states and the capitalists. It made several progressive steps forward: a limited form of workers' councils, a partial return to the class nature of the soviets (through the Council of Producers, formed as a branch of parliament in 1952), the introduction of a choice of candidates (though not of

parties) in elections, a partial easing of censorship and freedom of speech, etc. These were, however, matched by the negative developments: the growth of bourgeois nationalism, the growing wage differentials, the back-tracking on collectivization of agriculture, the drop in the percentage of workers in the YCP, the rapprochement with the Catholic Church, and the continuance of real power in the hands of the ruling bureaucracy. Yugoslavia has not developed as we would wish; but it *has* developed within the formulae of 1949 put forth by the Fourth International.

A question to Feldman and Johnson: what *should* the position of the Fourth International and SWP have been? Should we have dismissed the conflict between the YCP and Stalin as simply a conflict between two Stalinist cliques (perhaps defending Yugoslavia in the event of an invasion by Stalin)? That was the position of the Shachtmanites at the time; see, for example, Max Shachtman's article in the August 1948 *New Internationalist*. This was also the stance of the right-wing Social Democrats of the Socialist Party, as noted in an editorial in *Socialist Call* in November 1949. The SWP and the Fourth International polemicized vigorously against such a stance; were the Shachtmanites and Social Democrats correct? How do you account for this?

Bureaucratization is proceeding in Cuba today; if the deformation reaches the state where it is necessary for Trotskyists to call for a political revolution in Cuba, will Johnson and Feldman (or their successors) then retroactively argue (as the Shachtmanites do now) that the differentiation between Castroism and Stalinism made today by Trotskyists is incorrect?

The Johnson-Feldman method is ahistorical and totally empirical. They focus on the reality in Yugoslavia *today* and ignore the *process* by which it got there. If Yugoslavia today resembles the USSR today, then Yugoslavia must never have broken with Stalinism in the first place. Impressionism has never been so lauded.

For our part, we agree with the statements of the Fourth International and apply their method of analysis as well to the revolutionary parties which have carried out the socialist revolution in Vietnam and China. Johnson and Feldman have nothing with which to counter this but vituperation and venom.

John Hutton (Chapel Hill, North Carolina)
Paula Westfall (Bloomington, Indiana)

Long live the Fourth International!

* * *

International Socialist Review
14 Charles Lane
New York, N. Y. 10014
November 29, 1973

John Hutton
Paula Westfall
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

Dear Comrades:

I have received your undated letter in answer to a reply by George Johnson and Fred Feldman to a letter to the editor that appeared in the October issue of the *ISR*. The

subject of the exchange was the nature of the Vietnamese Communist Party. The debate was occasioned by the publication in France of a book by Comrade Pierre Rousset incorporating positions on Vietnamese Stalinism that had never been submitted to the International for discussion or vote. Since such positions had been taken to the public in a signed contribution by a well-known French Trotskyist, it was perfectly in order for the *ISR* to comment publicly on matters on which the International had no formal position.

Your letter, however, apart from its great length, is very far afield from Vietnam. It deals almost exclusively with the creation of a workers' state in Yugoslavia. It would be completely disproportionate from a simple editorial standpoint to print such a letter as a "comment" on a discussion of Vietnam, which it hardly mentions. We cannot agree to turning the letters column of the *ISR* into an internal bulletin for the critical examination of historical internal differences within the Fourth International. For Trotskyists the proper place for such a wide-ranging debate is in the internal bulletins where adequate space

can be given to presentation and rebuttal and the general public is not drawn into the internal disputes of the Leninist party. It is my understanding that you are both members of the Young Socialist Alliance, where you have access to the discussion materials of the SWP and of the International, as well as the opportunity to contribute to the YSA's internal bulletin in the preconvention period. As members of the YSA you should also be familiar with the norms of democratic centralism. If for no other reason I would be compelled to reject your letter on the grounds of the uncomradely tone of your polemic ("Feldman and Johnson have nothing with which to counter this but vituperation and venom."). You may have the idea that this is appropriate in an internal article, but I can assure you that we will not have exchanges in the party press between members of the American Trotskyist movement that convey such an impression to our readers.

Comradely,
s/Les Evans
Editor

OLD HUSBAND YARNS HAMPER DISCUSSION OF POLITICAL DIFFERENCES

by Tom Kerry

At long last, the Maitan-Mandel-Frank faction has presented its official platform. That is all to the good, for nothing so exemplifies the character of the MMF secret faction as this scurrilous compilation of mendacity and slander entitled: *Let's Discuss Political Differences, Not Old Wives' Tales*.

One would think that a document so pointedly titled would disdain the "Old Wives' Tales" and start right off "discussing" the political differences. But not so! In order that there be no misunderstanding, the author interposes an objection. He complains—I assume the author is a "he" judging by the title of the article which accepts the legend that gossip and rumor-mongering are the tell-tale mark of "Old Wives," and is never, but NEVER indulged in by "Old Husbands." At any rate, he begins with the complaint that there has already been *too much* discussion of political differences.

Furthermore, he takes exception to the quantity of documents, decries their length and finally arrives, through some rather tortuous logic, at the conclusion that the quantity of material in this political discussion is detrimental to true democracy.

"We," he avers, "would go so far as to say that the avalanche of long documents is, to some extent, prejudicial to democracy." (I don't know whether the "we" used by the author is the imperial "we" or is intended to convey the view of the entire faction.) Furthermore, he laments, "Some of them risk not being read, or being read too rapidly."

But, comrades of the so-called "Majority Tendency," that is not your concern. Your responsibility is to make the documents available in the agreed-upon translations, so that they can be read by those who wish to do so—and at the rate of speed which conforms to the capacity of each individual.

Despite the author's pain over the rich amount of discussion material, he does put out a diplomatic feeler in another direction: "The two tendencies have, to a certain extent, prevented other points of view from being expressed." All of this is really heart-rending. But who or what is responsible for this state of affairs? How have "other points of view" been "prevented" from being expressed? Could it be that the lack of "other points of view" is due to the fact that the discussion is, in many sections, only just beginning?

Hugo Blanco's Comment on Problem

With the differences tending to deepen and broaden, the discussion already discloses an ever widening gulf between the views of the major factions. What is the solution?

Comrade Hugo Blanco put his finger on the crux of the problem in his "Comments on Alain Krivine and Pierre Frank's Document 'Again, and Always, the Question of the International.'" (International Information Bulletin, No. 2, June 1972.)

"Among other things," says Blanco, "the authors point out: '. . . most of the members of the sections cannot participate in the daily life of the International as they do in that of their respective section. The daily problems, the problems of language, do not even permit them to follow the life of the most important sections.'"

"If," comments Comrade Blanco, "the deficiencies blocking the *real* formation of an international leadership of broad capacities are disregarded, and a course is followed as if these deficiencies were already overcome, the actual consequence is to fall into dangerous bureaucratism that can easily lead to wrecking sections that took years or decades of effort and experience to build." (Emphasis by Blanco.)

But the centralism-first-again-and-always author of "Let's Discuss," has no patience with such views. In his opinion the debate over political differences is itself the source of all the difficulties of the International — or at least of its present leadership. "Prolonging the debate," he grumbles, "is now provoking a cumulative tension that is resulting in national splits." How defuse the "cumulative tension" causing all the national splits? It's all very simple.

Pull the Cord — Reverse Engines — Stop Discussion!

Our anonymous author has a sure-fire prescription. "It is now necessary," he insists, "to pull the emergency cord on this dangerous process, reverse the engines, and open up a period of detente in which public activity and building the International will take precedence over internal debate." If that is so, if the considered opinion of the Mandel-Maitan-Frank faction is that the political discussion is the cause of all evil, then shouldn't the title of our author's opus be: "Let's *NOT* Discuss Political Differences: Let's Discuss Old Wives' Tales." And that is exactly what he proceeds to do!

Of course, as befits a man of such uncompromising rectitude, he is a bit apologetic about it. "We regret," he piously avows in the very first paragraph, "being obliged to devote too much space here to denouncing this gossip before clarifying the actual conditions under which the world congress is being prepared and before indicating political differences that separate the majority and minority."

So, you see, it is with extreme reluctance and through no inclination of his own that our guide is compelled to lead us to the netherworld of "Old Wives" gossip before proceeding to the rarefied atmosphere of "Old Husband" politics. His journey begins, appropriately enough, with the Barzman letter. Right at the bottom.

From that vantage point our author expresses surprise that the Barzman letter should evoke any excitement. It was, you see, merely a "private" letter from Barzman to his bosom companions. True, it consisted, admits our author, of "some gossip," "some impressions," "some proposals," and "some unfortunate statements." Nothing really important.

Despite the protestations of our impeccable guide a cursory reading of the Barzman epistle doesn't exactly convey the impression that it is, what in French is termed, a *billet-doux*.

The Domingo letter, circulated in Latin America by Livio Maitan, was also fobbed off as a "private" letter. Nevertheless, both the Barzman and Domingo letters served to confirm what we had suspected for some time. That the Mandel-Maitan-Frank group in the International was functioning as a secret faction; i.e., an unprincipled combination of factional cliques.

It's best to begin calling things by their right names. If the "IEC Majority Tendency" is not a secret faction it certainly is the best imitation of one that I have ever seen.

Our virtuous author feigns righteous indignation when he declares: "It goes without saying that the majority tendency rejects the minority's grotesque proposal that the majority transform itself into a faction. We have never dreamed of forming a faction. *We are and we remain a tendency.*" (His emphasis.)

Our virtuous author either doesn't know the difference between a tendency and a faction or finds it politically expedient to obscure the difference and thus to dodge the obligation of elaborating a comprehensive political platform. The MMF faction eschews such a principled course of action for fear of splitting its heterogeneous combination into its diverse elements.

As that type of grouping is nourished on the fiction of infallibility it is incapable of admitting an error. When its line fails to meet the acid test of historical development, as in Latin America, it proceeds on the premise that if historical events do not conform to its prognosis then so much the worse for historical events. But to operate in this manner requires a tightly knit faction. Not an open faction based on political program and principles, but a secret association for mutual aid and protection.

Perversion of Language Serves Political Purpose

Even language is perverted to serve the needs of the secret faction. A clearly spelled out prognosis that proved invalid and led to disastrous consequences, as did the Latin American guerrilla warfare line of the last congress, is transmuted by semantic sleight-of-hand into "elliptical and synthetic" formulations. When such devices prove none too convincing the attempt is made to change the subject. "Forget what we said and did yesterday, look what we promise for tomorrow." That is the *modus operandi* of the faction leaders.

Our self-righteous author "never dreamed of forming a faction," because his faction has been in *sub rosa* existence for years and he has been one of its charter members.

The Faction Division of Labor

There is, of course, a division of labor among the Mandel-Maitan-Frank trio. Ernest Mandel is the ideologue of the group and among the "Old Husbands," is the one who fathers the political documents, although they, too, often bear the anonymous authorship of "IEC Majority Tendency."

Pierre Frank is the *org-spetz*, who draws on his decades of experience to beget—in the name of "democratic centralism" of course—the belligerent, factional documents, that deal with the "organization question."

Livio Maitan, since he fell from grace following the debacle of his Latin America line, is the "trouble-shooter" for the faction, the faction "fireman," who is dispatched to the "hot spots."

If they wish to continue playing the game of hide-and-seek by remaining anonymous that is their business. I prefer to consider them in their individual and collective persons as responsible for what their faction says and does.

Some Lessons in Democratic Centralism!

If we but follow the prescribed route indicated by our author, we are assured we will wind up with a world congress, that "will give ourselves and the entire international workers movement a practical lesson in democratic centralism." That is interesting. That, my comrades, is very interesting! For what we all need most at this moment in history are some practical lessons in "democratic centralism." And there is none more qualified to give us such instruction as the author of "Let's Discuss!"

The author cites some concrete instances in which he contends the SWP has been guilty of violating the norms of democratic centralism. He further accuses the SWP of employing a double standard, that is, of arrogating to itself rights which it denies to others. Such lessons as our author sets out to teach are extremely helpful for they deal with concrete events which can be tested against actual experience—an improvement, I might add, to the method employed by Krivine and Frank in their manual of abstractions on "the Question of the International."

Let's begin with the first count in our author's indictment, one with which I am rather familiar, in which Tom Kerry is alleged to have violated democratic centralism by publicly attacking "members or organizations of the International," as our author puts it; to wit, "an article by Tom Kerry against Tariq Ali in the *International Socialist Review*."

Democratic Centralism—Lesson Number One

With all due regard for our author's careless way of handling facts, the article in question was not written "against Tariq Ali." It was actually written against Mao Tse-tung—Tariq Ali just stumbled into the line of fire. It happened to be the lead article in the September-October 1969 issue of *International Socialist Review*, entitled: "A Mao-Stalin Rift: Myth or Fact." Tariq Ali occupies a very small part in the article. The only reason he appears in the article at all is a matter of coincidence.

At the time I was working on the article, a book edited by Tariq Ali and first published in Great Britain, was reprinted by an American publishing house and given wide publicity in this country. The book was entitled: *The New Revolutionaries: A Handbook of the International Radical Left*. At the time Tariq Ali was still highly touted as a figure in the "New Left." The biographical blurb on the jacket of the American edition, published by William Morrow & Company, Inc., proclaimed, among other things, that the author "has been called in *The New Yorker* 'the guru of protest.'"

What Tariq Ali writes for publication under his own name is of little concern to me. Unfortunately, in a brief preface signed by the author, there appears the legend that a "streak of Trotskyism" runs through his entire volume. I took exception when that "streak" manifested itself in the assertion by Tariq Ali that "Mao's stature as one of the greatest revolutionary leaders of this century is beyond question."

It might have appeared "beyond question" for "the guru of protes!" but not for me. Nor do I consider it Trotskyist doctrine. And in my *ISR* article analyzing the myth of a Stalin-Mao rift, I presented my critique of the view advanced by Tariq Ali, among others, that the only reason the Chinese Communist Party was able to take state power in China was the fact that Mao had broken decisively with Stalin.

What a furious outcry my article evoked! Not from Tariq Ali as I recall, nor from his mentors Ernest Mandel and Livio Maitan at whose ideological fountain he imbibed the myth, but from Peter Petersen, then representing the political committee of the IMG.

We received a lengthy letter signed by Peter Petersen contending that I had committed a gross violation of

"democratic centralism." A subordinate complaint was that I had picked on Tariq Ali when there were so many other more vulnerable than he whom I might have selected for my targets, Nahuel Moreno, to mention one.

To "attack" Comrade Moreno, you see, is not a *violation* of democratic centralism, but is, presumably, an example of its *application*. It is no accident that Comrade Petersen so readily wound up in the camp of the author of "Let's Discuss."

I do not find any relevance in any of the other "examples" cited by Peter Petersen in his letter of protest. What I do find of relevance to our current dispute and what I did not know at the time I wrote my *ISR* article, is the fact cited in the Peter Petersen letter stating that: "The article in question [in Tariq Ali's book] was, in fact, discussed in draft form with a member of the United Secretariat (Strong)."

This makes the cheese more binding! For if my purpose was to seek for something to "attack" in the Tariq article, I could have found an even more flagrant transgression.

This example, for one, in which Tariq Ali asserts that: "In October 1949, exactly thirty-two years after the Bolshevik Revolution, Mao's peasant armies marched into Peking and proclaimed China a People's Republic. *Since the largest country in the world was now under a communist government, the Soviet Union had no option but to help it. This was the logic of its own historic legacy and this is as true today as it was then: if a revolution succeeds, the Soviet Union will be obliged to aid it—or it will be compelled to justify its own existence as a socialist country in completely different terms.*" (My emphasis—TK)

This was written after the Kremlin had withdrawn all material aid from China and when the Sino-Soviet rift was quite far advanced; after the Czechoslovakian invasion by Kremlin tanks; 13 years after the crushing of the Hungarian revolution in 1956, etc., etc.

Now I submit, comrades, that this is *not* Trotskyism, neither a "streak" nor even a smidgin. And the fact that it was "discussed in draft form with a member of the United Secretariat" doesn't make it any more acceptable. Neither does the fact that Tariq Ali included in his published collection two articles written by Pierre Frank and one by Ernest Mandel.

Nowhere in our history will the Mandel-Maitan-Frank faction find sanction for characterizing as a "streak of Trotskyism," the view that China is "now under a communist government," or that the Soviet Union is a "socialist country."

What About the Democratic Centralism Gambit?

Nor have we ever heard one whisper, not a hint, that perhaps it was a violation of "democratic centralism" for a prominent member of the Fourth International to make such non-Trotskyist statements in public! But four years later, in the faction platform of the Mandel-Maitan-Frank combination, the Socialist Workers Party is maligned for practicing "a double standard" for tolerating Tom Kerry's gross violation of "democratic centralism" in publicly "attacking" poor Tariq Ali.

But that is not all! When we received the letter of protest from Peter Petersen it seemed to us the height of folly to become involved with the leadership of the IMG in a

controversy over "democratic centralism" about an issue that involved a dispute over questions of an historical-theoretical character. Tariq Ali was, therefore, personally invited to submit a reply for publication in the *ISR*. This was followed by a letter from the Political Committee of the SWP, repeating the invitation, and broadening it to include any others who wished to contribute to the discussion.

But we received not a word, not a single, mumbling word, either from Tariq Ali or from Mandel-Maitan-Frank and Company. Instead, we had the none-too-edifying spectacle of leaders of the International trying to smuggle in their views on Maoism instead of availing themselves of the opportunity to engage in open discussion. (See exchange of correspondence between IMG and SWP published as appendix to this article.)

But hold, after four years of such twisting and squirming, Ernest Mandel has finally submitted his views of the dynamic of the third Chinese revolution. It is now made abundantly clear from what source Tariq Ali got his ideas on Mao and Maoism. As is now the pattern, the Mandel document is submitted in the name of the "IEC Majority Tendency." Isn't it a rather strange sort of "tendency" that finds itself committed piecemeal to views that in some instances are the exact opposite to what some of their adherents previously professed?

Watch the Political Acrobats Perform!

It will be of more than passing interest to watch the reaction of Massey-Barzman and Company to the Mandel revelations on Mao and Maoism, now published in the discussion bulletin. To refresh my memory, I went back to the text of the "Letter to the Political Committee on the Formation of a Political Tendency," published in *SWP Discussion Bulletin* Vol. 31, No. 1, and there I read:

"The current discussion on China is of value chiefly in the adoption of a more correct analysis of the role of Stalinism and its Maoist and other national variants. The International majority evidenced in its positions a critical error in the consideration of Maoism as bureaucratic centrism. This position, if not corrected can only lead to illusions about other Stalinist leaderships which in turn could lead to projecting a course that would be detrimental to the building of the International. There is a certain tendency in this direction evident in some of the European sections' positions toward the leadership of the DRV-NLF and the Seven-Point Program."

This declaration of the formation of a "Political Tendency" was received under date of January 19, 1973. If at that time, Massey, et al., considered the position of "bureaucratic centrism" a "critical error," we wait with bated breath for their considered opinion of Ernest Mandel's latest lucubrations.

So the first, and what I presume was considered the most flagrant example, of the alleged "double standard" of the SWP on the question of "democratic centralism," turns out to be exactly its opposite. Individuals, groups, tendencies and even sections, associated with the faction leaders are permitted to say—or do—whatever they please without let or hindrance, but any criticism is stigmatized as a violation of "democratic centralism." Which brings me to the next count in the indictment, the famous Sallustro affair.

Lesson Number Two—The Sallustro Affair

The author of the MMF faction platform takes us to task for our "public attack, concerning the Sallustro affair, against the Argentine PRT, which was at that time still a member of the International."

First, to correct a distortion of fact, a practice to which our author seems peculiarly addicted. The published statement of the Political Committee of the SWP on the Sallustro kidnapping and execution contained no mention of the Argentine PRT. In the context of attacking the brutal regime of the Argentine military dictatorship, the statement pointed out—in what could only be considered mild criticism—that the ERP's resort to methods such as kidnapping could only hinder and could not in any case advance the struggle for socialism in Argentina.

Remember, the Sallustro kidnapping evoked wide publicity in the world press. Responsibility for the incident was universally attributed to the "Trotskyists." One would assume that under the circumstances, the United Secretariat would have had something to say on the subject, but it remained mute. It gave no lead, no hint of its views in the affair. However, the United Secretariat meeting of April 15-16 did proceed to adopt a faction "motion by Pierre" by a vote of 6 to 5 to "disapprove" of the publication of the SWP statement in the organs of the International.

No such ban was applied to the sections that publicly hailed the Sallustro kidnapping and execution as an "exemplary" action! And then the United Secretariat proceeded to adjourn without taking an official position on the affair, one way or another. The SWP PC later rejected the "ban" as a caricature of "democratic centralism," for that is what it was.

(See *Internal Information Bulletin*, No. 5, November 1972, for text of Sallustro documents.)

The so-called "leaders" of the International lack the courage of their convictions. So they have adopted a system of double-speak. They dare not come out openly in defense of individual terrorism so they adapt to it in the guise of upholding the right of "minority violence." Our esteemed author takes us to task in the MMF faction platform. "... by reducing the role of our sections, as such, to a propaganda role," he says, "the minority actually denies them the right to take any action on their own, including, of course, any action of minority violence."

The deceptive phrase "minority violence" is an empty vessel that can be filled with any content. If our MMF faction leaders wish to challenge the traditional Marxist view of terrorism as the discredited tactic of petty-bourgeois currents in the workers movement, they know they are in for some pretty tough sledding. That is why the issue of "democratic centralism" looms so large in their calculations. If only they were equipped with a big "centralist" club to clobber their opponents into line, how simple life would be. But the method of accusing others of deviations they themselves are guilty of is not going to work. So much for count number two.

Lesson Number Three of Indictment

The third count of organizational duplicity against the SWP is a dilly. Our irascible author chides the SWP because it "protests the fact that the document on building the European sections has been published in the maga-

zines of several sections, forgetting that this document had been adopted by the IEC as the basis for the activity of these sections and not only as a discussion document."

Whoever it was that declared there is nothing new under the sun, hasn't been around the MMF faction. I have before me the International Internal Discussion Bulletin, Vol. IX, No. 5, November 1972. In it there appears a document entitled: "The Building of Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe," and then, in parenthesis: "(Draft Theses submitted to the Tenth World Congress—Fourth Since Reunification)."

There is no indication that the document was of a dual nature. On the one hand, a line document submitted for decision by the world congress and on the other, a set of tactical prescriptions derived from that line to serve as guidance for the European sections in their present day-to-day activities. But the entire resolution was published "in the magazines of several sections," and not just those tactical directives intended to guide the sections of Europe in their current activities.

We set aside for the moment comment on this rather bizarre method of combining a world congress "draft theses" with a manual on tactics. Was any consideration given to publishing the reply to the European document by Mary-Alice Waters in the same "magazines of the sections" that published the world congress draft? If my memory serves me she took issue with both the line and the tactics of that document, as well as the spurious "evaluation" of entryism *sui generis* contained therein.

Did not the unilateral and undiscussed decision by the MMF faction to release for public consumption a document submitted for decision by the world congress, while denying the minority the right to public reply, violate the most elementary concept of "democratic centralism"?

If, as our author insists, "the document on building the European sections," had been "adopted by the IEC as the basis for the current activity of these sections," then, you see, it would be stigmatized as a violation of "democratic centralism" for the "magazines of the several sections," to publish any opposition views, for that would be construed as a public attack on the IEC. Talk about "the double standard." It's an unbeatable formula—not for democratic centralism, to be sure—but for stifling the democratic rights of minorities and exercising bureaucratic control.

Lessons Number Four, Five and Six!

To highlight our alleged penchant for applying a "double standard" our petulant author contrasts our protest of the publication of the pre-congress discussion material in the public magazines of several European sections with what he charges to be a reprehensible practice of the SWP. He contends the SWP "is coming more and more to use its magazine essentially as a factional organ (Camejo's article against 'Guevarism'; the article on Vietnam attacking Pierre Rousset's book, a book most of its readers are unfamiliar with; the public polemic in the last *ISR* against the Vietnam resolution adopted by the November 1972 IEC Plenum, under the guise of a response to a letter from a reader)."

A most imposing list of "violations" of "democratic centralism," which, I am sure, "most of his readers," and

many of ours will not know what in hell he is talking about.

So let us try and unravel the tangled skein of specious charges woven by our light-fingered author to bolster his accusations against the SWP's "double standard." First, the Camejo article on "Guevarism." The article by Peter Camejo, which appeared in the November 1972 issue of *ISR*, was featured on the front cover under the following title: "A Critique and Some Proposals: Why Guevara's Guerrilla Strategy Has No Future."

You disagree, comrade author, with *any* criticism of Guevarism? Or is it that you disagree with Camejo's critique? Or maybe it was some of his proposals to which you took exception! Then why didn't you say so? And if you had submitted your disagreements with what Camejo said on the subject they too would have been published in the *ISR*. Or do you consider it a violation of "democratic centralism" for the *ISR* to publish articles with whose content you might disagree? Or, more revealing, is it your view that "Guevarism" is now part of the program of the Fourth International?

On the Nature of the Vietnam Communist Party

The review in the *ISR* of Pierre Rousset's book is a horse of another hue. To my knowledge, neither any known congress of the Fourth International, nor the IEC, nor the United Secretariat, has adopted the line of the Rousset book on the nature of the Vietnamese Communist Party. He may have spoken in his book under the imprimatur of the Ligue Communiste and other European sections, and some comrades may have drawn from this the erroneous impression that he speaks on this question for the International, but that doesn't make it official. Not yet!

We consider his thesis on the nature of the VCP a highly debatable one, to say the least. I call your attention to the cover of the *ISR* of July-August 1973, which features the review of the Rousset book. What does it say? Right on the front cover. "*Contribution to a debate: On the Nature of the Vietnamese Communist Party.*" And I can assure you, comrade author, that the *ISR* would welcome a contribution from Rousset, to what I consider a very excellent critical review by Comrades Johnson and Feldman of his opus magnum in the *ISR*.

The last of our author's grievances tops them all! On the inside cover of the *ISR*, in each issue of the magazine, is the correspondence column. At the head of the column appears the following standard head which reads: "This column is open to all viewpoints on subjects of interest to our readers. Please keep your letters brief. Where necessary they will be abridged. Please indicate if your name may be used or if you prefer initials instead."

In the October 1973 issue of the magazine there is published a letter from a reader who takes issue with some of the views expressed in the Johnson-Feldman review of the Pierre Rousset book. In line with the above quoted note the writer of the letter requested that only his initials be used on the published letter. The editors complied with his request and in consonance with the policy of the magazine, permitted the writers of the review to reply to the criticisms in the letter.

This standard procedure is parlayed into the implied charge that the letter was faked in order to provide the

SWP with the pretext to reply to a public criticism of a published article, in order to conduct a "public" polemic against the "Vietnam resolution adopted by the November 1972 IEC Plenum."

Caught with the goods at last! A flagrant violation of "democratic centralism." But I saw no reference to the Vietnam resolution of the IEC plenum either in the readers' letter or in the reply by Johnson and Feldman. What sort of a "public polemic" is it in which: (1) the object of the alleged polemic, i.e., the IEC plenum and its resolution, remains completely invisible; (2) in which no "public" reader of the magazine could by any stretch of the imagination be privy to the "knowledge" that what was involved in the exchange was a "disguised" polemic against the IEC and its resolution; (3) because no one, then or now, could possibly know what in the hell our comrade author is talking about for he gives no indication of what views were allegedly being polemicized against; and (4) there was nothing said in reply that was essentially different from what had been said in the review already published in the previous issue of the *ISR*. So what purpose would be served by the sort of trickery charged by our author? And what sort of twisted factional logic could even conceive that such trickery was really involved?

Sense and Nonsense on What Is Senseless

The term "senseless" seems to be a favorite expression of our learned author. The term often appears in the bourgeois press where it is usually applied to characterize the commission of a crime that seemingly has no rational motive. Our erudite critic stigmatizes our insistence upon the publication, translation and distribution of pre-congress discussion material, as "increasingly senseless demands upon the international leadership."

What may appear as "senseless" to the author of "Let's Discuss Political Differences," to us appears quite sensible. In fact, we are convinced it is the sine qua non for a democratic congress. Our motive is transparently clear. But doesn't it seem a contradiction for the author of a document entitled "Let's Discuss Political Differences" to call for an immediate halt to the discussion? Wouldn't it be fair to say his motive is suspect? Or, if he prefers, somewhat senseless!

But the crowning demonstration of what can be expected from the Mandel-Maitan-Frank faction's perverted concept of "democratic centralism" is their kneejerk reaction to the recent split in the Canadian section.

(All of the pertinent information surrounding this incident has been published in the SWP's Internal Information Bulletin, No. 5, November 1973.)

As has been the practice encouraged by the top leaders of the MMF faction, when their supporters in the Canadian party walked out and joined an opponent group, they immediately telephoned a horror story about having been expelled for "defending the line of the Ninth World Congress."

Without waiting to confirm the story, or bothering to extend to the official section the elementary courtesy of hearing their version, our author rushed into print to condemn the Canadian section as—you guessed it—"senseless," and to warn of the retribution awaiting them at the forthcoming Tenth World Congress.

The author of "Let's Discuss," begins somewhat pontificaly by taking "note of the fact that the Canadian section has

begun expulsion proceedings against comrades in the minority there who are accused of having publicly defended the line of the Ninth World Congress on Bolivia, which is contrary to the line of the last Canadian convention."

That's the "Old Husband Yarn" telephoned from Canada to Europe in accord with what the Barzman letter urged was required to supply the need of the MMF faction for "ammunition." Accepting this counterfeit as good coin our author proceeds to "serve warning that we will not accept the expulsion of these comrades from the Fourth International for the sole crime of having adhered to its statutes. If comrades of the minority sink to such [here it comes again] senseless measures, which *clearly violate international democratic centralism*, we will be obligated to propose appropriate measures to the Tenth World Congress so that those who are expelled remain members of the Fourth International, without affecting any statute of the Canadian section, or any other section." (My emphasis.)

After rushing into print with the pronouncement of sentence sans hearing or trial, the MMF faction "democratically" decided to put the Canadian point on the agenda of the United Secretariat for "discussion." But when the facts were laid on the table our doughty defenders of "democracy" lamely asked for more time to consider the question, while continuing to circulate their false charges against the Canadian section under the imprimatur of the "IEC Majority Tendency."

Why the Obsession with "Democratic Centralism"?

Why the obsessive preoccupation with "democratic centralism" at this stage in the history of the International?

The issue of "democratic centralism," as presented by our venerable author, is a patent fraud. Under Lenin's concept of democratic centralism, it is true that the minority is obligated to accept the decisions of the majority, after a full, complete and democratic discussion. *But this principle is predicated on the premise that both sides agree to submit the ultimate decision to the decisive test of events.*

Lenin pointed out that politics had this advantage over religion—that is required no high priest to rule over disputed questions. The ultimate authority in politics, under Lenin's concept of democratic centralism, is the actual course of historical development in which the events themselves soon prove who was right and who wrong.

To my knowledge, neither Lenin nor Trotsky ever dealt with the problem that would arise if the majority refused to accept the judgment of the decisive test of historic events. Probably such a situation seemed inconceivable to them but that is precisely what happened in the case of the line laid down by the Latin American resolution at the Ninth World Congress.

Majority Refuses to Accept Verdict of History

Had the congress majority recognized its error and proceeded to correct it, drawing all the educational lessons from the experience, there would not have developed the sort of bitter factional struggle we now see unfolding. For the refusal to recognize and correct their mistakes led them into compounding their error, to disorienting their supporters and embittering the ensuing controversy.

It led, ineluctably, to crude attempts to cover up the disastrous consequences of their false line; to shift ground,

to "reinterpret" what was said and done, to resort to semantic hankypanky by contending that the "elliptical and synthetic" wording of their central axis—"rural guerrilla warfare"—led to a misunderstanding on our part.

For, they insisted, all they really were advocating was "armed struggle" and the right of "minority violence," etc., etc. And anyone who opposes that, you see, is nothing but a low-down "rightist."

They then tried to change the subject and succeeded in deepening their error by applying the same methodology to the document on Europe, with its reliance on the specious "mass vanguard" as a suitable instrument of revolutionary struggle.

Will they abide by the test of events when they come-a-cropper with their 5-year timetable in Europe? Or will they once again find alibis to explain away their errors while, in the process, continuing to adapt their program and doctrine to the latest political fads of the so-called "vanguard" currents in the working-class movement?

Some Pertinent Questions Posed

As this process of degeneration deepens, the presence of orthodox Trotskyist critics within their orbit, becomes

APPENDIX

Correspondence between the International Marxist Group and the Socialist Workers Party

London
November 18, 1969

To: United Secretariat of Fourth International
Copy: Socialist Workers Party of USA

Dear Comrades,

The Political Committee of the International Marxist Group wishes to bring to your attention a serious matter. In the September-October issue of INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST REVIEW there is an article by Tom Kerry entitled "A Mao-Stalin Rift—Myth or Fact"; this article virtually starts with an attack on Tariq Ali, a member of the IEC of the Fourth International who is also on the National Committee of the IMG. The article is the main piece in the journal, it is written by the editor and is featured as the key article of the issue on the cover. It has, therefore, all the hallmarks of being an authoritative and definitive statement.

After the attack, Tom Kerry, as if to excuse his action, writes: "Tariq Ali wrote this article for the anthology before the announcement of his adherence to the International Marxist Group, the British section of the Fourth International. . . ."

This statement is false: in the very book that Tom Kerry refers to Tariq Ali acknowledges the help given to him in producing the book by his colleagues of the IMG. The article in question was, in fact, discussed in draft form with a member of the United Secretariat (Strong).

It is not the intention of this letter to take up the politics of Tom Kerry's article. However, we want to pose a number of implications of an attack like this.

more and more intolerable. How to shut us up? That is the real question that preoccupies the author of "Let's Discuss." That answer, he finds, lies in a generous dose of what he conceives of as "democratic centralism."

Since the Ninth World Congress and its aftermath the fragile homogeneity of the International has been shattered. How restore it? Simple, says our author, "pull the emergency cord," "reverse the engines," call a halt to the discussion and let's proceed to "build the international."

On what program, with what strategy and tactics, with what organizational concepts, with what theory and with what methods? Don't distract us with such questions, for—to paraphrase our frustrated architect—we have all the ammunition we need in our arsenal, above all our most effective weapon: "democratic centralism."

No, comrade author, at this stage in the development of the International, that is not going to build anything. Your distorted version of "democratic centralism" and its projected bureaucratic application is a crude formula, not for building the International, but for destroying it.

December 4, 1973

Firstly, we would point out that the charges by Tom Kerry against Tariq Ali are:

(1) he contributed to the myth of a Mao-Stalin rift; and,
(2) he regards Mao as one of the great revolutionaries of the 20th century.

INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST REVIEW has not always regarded this view as heresy. In the Fall, 1960, issue of the journal in [an] article by Murry Weiss, the editor then, it was written:

". . . The Chinese Communist party did *not* act according to Stalinist theory and practice when it led the revolution to power. . . . If, by *following* the Stalinist program the Chinese Communist party had overthrown imperialism, landlordism and capitalism, then indeed it would be necessary to reexamine the Trotskyist theory of Stalinism. . . . The Chinese CP 'in defiance of Stalin's edicts' took power. According to the recently 'leaked' records of the July 1945 Potsdam Conference, published in the MINNEAPOLIS TRIBUNE August 22, 1960, Stalin, in his meeting with Churchill and Truman, referred to Chiang Kai-shek as 'the best of the lot.' Stalin said he 'saw no other possible leader and that, for example, he did not believe that the Chinese Communist leaders were as good or would be able to bring about the unification of China.'

"Clearly the Kremlin wanted the Chinese CP to continue its ruinous policy of working for a coalition with the Chiang regime. It was only when the situation became so rotten ripe for the overthrow of the inwardly decomposing and demoralised Nationalist government, and when the elemental movement of the agrarian revolution swept the Chinese CP leaders along with it that they could

no longer abide by Stalin's directives. This is the simple fact (sic) about how and why the Chinese CP took power." (original emphasis throughout—the article was a polemic against one Walter Kendall, the deletions are references to him).

In the Spring, 1962, issue of the journal, in a joint article by Murry Weiss and Bert Deck (managing editor), one could read:

". . . the Chinese CP refused to give up its own armed forces, the Red Army, in the course of its coalition attempts with Chiang Kai-shek. This key decision in turn enabled and even compelled the Chinese CP to stand at the head of a socialist revolution . . ." and later in the article:

"In a comparable manner (supporting John L. Lewis against the AFL bureaucracy) today, we support Mao without being Maoists. To be more concrete: on the main theoretical questions in dispute between the Russians and the Chinese, we think the Chinese are correct. In addition, the Chinese leaders base themselves on revolutionary social strata aroused by 650 million people entering the arena of history."

Perhaps Tariq Ali obtained his "unfortunate" views on the Mao-Stalin fight and Mao's revolutionary stature from reading INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST REVIEW!

Secondly we must ask: why was there no consultation with us before the article was published? Tariq Ali is the best known member of the IMG; he is under constant attack by our political opponents, particularly the SLL, it is elementary comradeship that we should have *at the very least* been told that the SWP wished to publicly dissociate itself from the views expressed in the book.

The first we heard of this article was when an airmail copy arrived in this country. The secretary of the IMG first heard of the article when a young member telephoned him about it because of rumors she had heard.

Surely our friends in the SWP realise the particular problems an incident like this raises for us:

—We have two principal political opponents: the SLL and International Socialism Group. The former is constantly accusing us of "selling out" to Stalinism because we have forced the YCL and elements around the Communist Party to work with us in a united front in defence of the Vietnamese revolution. Tom Kerry's article will appear to confirm this charge. In our relations with the IS we have always condemned that organisation's departure from democratic centralism, in particular because no common line is put forward by its members in public and all differences are openly discussed. How will we be able to square our criticisms of them and the Tom Kerry article?

Of course, there are easy answers to the problems we have raised but they involve us in unnecessary problems. All this could have been avoided had we been consulted.

Thirdly, why was it necessary to attack Tariq Ali in the course of writing the article? If Tom Kerry wanted to write an article expressing such views he could have easily done so without mentioning the book or Tariq Ali.

Fourthly, why was Tariq Ali singled out for an attack on this matter? Apart from the already quoted views, we could refer to many other writers who are well-known Trotskyists who have, if one follows Tom Kerry's line of reasoning, contributed to this myth. To avoid using too much paper and going too far into the past we will content ourselves with quoting just one book.

We refer to "Fifty Years of World Revolution", edited by Ernest Mandel and published by Merit Publishers; it would appear to us to be reasonable to assume that Tom Kerry is familiar with this book. Perhaps the following escaped his eye: (1) in the article in this book by Nahuel Moreno, there are a whole series of statements which argue that Mao broke with Stalinism as early as 1935 (most of them appearing before the writer qualified his views as being personal); (2) on page 227, in an article by S. B. Kolpe, one can read: "The victory of the Chinese Revolution was accomplished by the Maoist leadership despite the negative antirevolutionary policies of the Kremlin bureaucracy in the postwar period. Stalin wanted the Chinese CP to enter into a coalition with the bourgeois Chiang Kai-shek. He recognised the Chinese Revolution only after it was fait accompli."; (3) on pages 328-29, in an article by Joe Hansen, we read: "The greatest victory since 1917 happened in China and not Western Europe because, among other reasons, Stalin proved strong enough to block a successful proletarian revolution in such countries as Italy and France after the end of World War II, but not in China."; (4) on page 355, in an article by J. P. Cannon, appears: "Certain Communist leaderships were confronted with the alternative of being crushed by reaction, outflanked by the revolutionary forces, or taking command of the national liberation and anti-capitalist struggles. After some hesitation and vacillation, and against the Kremlin's advice, the Communist leaders in Yugoslavia, China and Vietnam took the latter course and led the proletariat and peasantry to power. . . ."

We repeat: why was Tariq Ali singled out for attack when there are other possible targets—nearer home in some cases!—for Tom Kerry's ire?

Lastly, it might be argued that we are over-reacting to a relatively minor misunderstanding. This is not the case. As already explained because of our special position in Britain this affair will create problems for us—unnecessary ones.

But there is more involved than this.

It is quite contrary to the traditions and practices of democratic centralism to have uncontrolled public discussion of differences in the form of leaders attacking each others' views. Such debate is, of course, permissible and can be valuable provided it is controlled, comradesly and with full consultation. If it is left to the whim of individuals only chaos and confusion, which will disorient our membership and periphery, will result.

We must point out that there are on occasion views expressed by our comrades of the SWP in their publications with which we find ourselves in disagreement. Sometimes these views are reproduced in INTERCONTINENTAL PRESS and, therefore, distributed in Britain. Despite this fact we would never think of differentiating ourselves publicly from those views unless we had carefully discussed the matter and consulted all concerned. The same goes for other sections' views. We are sure that there are other sections which, from time to time, have similar feelings. What would happen if we all behaved in the manner of Tom Kerry?

Let us conclude by saying that we will consider the incident closed if our views are made known to the members of the SWP and the leaders of sections and groups of the International. We have no wish to change the warm

and fraternal relations which exist between the IMG and the SWP, on the contrary it is because we wish to maintain these relations that we have to make our views known. Because the ISR is now on sale in Britain we are acquainting all members of the IMG with our views. At present we do not envisage the necessity of making a public statement.

Revolutionary greetings,
PETER PETERSON
(for Political Committee of the IMG)

* * *

New York
March 19, 1970

Peter Peterson
Political Committee of the IMG
Copy: United Secretariat of the Fourth International

Dear Comrade Peterson,

I am enclosing a copy of a communication that was approved by the Political Committee of the Socialist Workers Party at a meeting March 19, 1970.

Fraternally yours,
s/Jack Barnes

In a letter dated November 18, 1969, sent by the Political Committee of the International Marxist Group to the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, with a copy to the Socialist Workers Party of the USA, various questions were raised concerning an article by Tom Kerry entitled "A Mao-Stalin Rift—Myth or Fact?" that included an expression of difference with a statement made by Tariq Ali in his book *The New Revolutionaries: A Handbook of the International Radical Left*.

The Political Committee of the Socialist Workers Party is of the opinion that the difference does not directly involve either a matter of current political line or basic position of the world Trotskyist movement. It concerns a debatable historical question.

In fields such as this, the Political Committee of the Socialist Workers Party is opposed to the imposition of views that may be contrary to those held by a particular author. As we see it, democratic centralism is not synonymous with

monolithism, but permits freedom of public expression in areas where united political action is not immediately concerned, as determined by the conventions and congresses of the Fourth International and its sections, or organizations in fraternal solidarity with the Fourth International.

This attitude has hitherto governed the publication of many items sponsored by the world Trotskyist movement, as was notably the case with the collective book *Fifty Years of World Revolution*.

We agree that public debate on such issues should be conducted in comradely fashion and that if the debate should lead to, or should disclose, differences over policy of some depth, the discussion should be transferred to the internal publications of the movement.

We note the correction made by the Political Committee of the IMG concerning Comrade Ali's membership status at the time he wrote his book. The misstatement in the article in the *International Socialist Review* resulted from wrong information and can easily be publicly rectified if it is felt necessary. However, Comrade Kerry included the statement precisely in order to show that his criticism on this point was not directed at the IMG. It should also be noted that Comrade Kerry also made completely clear that he does not regard Comrade Ali to be a "Maoist," and that it was his intention to deal only with a point in a currently widely circulated book having to do with events that occurred almost a quarter of a century ago.

From the reports of the American comrades who discussed this matter with Comrade Tariq Ali and the other leaders of the IMG last December, we assumed that the misunderstandings had been cleared up and that Comrade Ali would feel free, if he wished, to reply to Comrade Kerry in the pages of the *International Socialist Review*. As yet, however, the editorial board reports that it has heard nothing further about this. Perhaps the British comrades have given further consideration to the questions of a reply or it has not been possible to find time to write something along the lines indicated by Comrade Ali in the discussion last December.

In any case, we should like to confirm what our American comrades told the Political Committee of the IMG last December—that the pages of the *International Socialist Review* remain open to contributions on this subject and that we feel that further discussion of the difference could prove to be both stimulating and fruitful, providing fresh evidence of the rich intellectual life characteristic of our world Trotskyist movement.

*HOW THE TROTSKYISM OF THE IEC MAJORITY
"TENDENCY" IS DISINTEGRATING UNDER THE
PRESSURE OF ITS LINE ON LATIN AMERICA*

by Fred Feldman, Brooklyn Branch, New York Local

For months, embarrassed supporters and half-supporters of the IEC Majority "Tendency" have predicted a "retreat" from its disastrous position on Latin America. On the contrary, the line document entitled "On the Question of Armed Struggle in Latin America" (IIDB, Volume X, Number 20) deepens the guerrilla warfare line. Together with other positions of the "tendency," it now emerges as a full-fledged shift towards revisionism.

1. Why a Line Document on "Armed Struggle"?

The very title of the document shows the extent to which this important facet of revolutionary struggle has been fetishized by the IEC Majority "Tendency." John S., the only supporter of the "Internationalist 'Tendency'" in the Brooklyn branch (I assume that this automatically confers on him the title of "Brooklyn coordinator"), attempted a partial justification of such fetishism in his report by expressing a general preference for left deviations over supposedly right-wing ones. For fear of right deviations, left deviations have been turned into icons by the IEC Majority "Tendency."

There is no resolution before us on party-building tasks in Latin America, on the state of the trade-union and student movements, on the problems of underground work, on the defense of class-struggle prisoners, or on the concrete application of the Transitional Program to the cities and rural areas, despite the fact that continental resolutions are part of the IEC Majority's general method. All these questions are subordinated in the resolution to "armed struggle." In the service of this graven image, the document manages to effectively reduce the Transitional Program to a single ultimatic slogan: "To Arms!"

According to the line document, our sections—once they have accumulated something called a "minimum" of cadres (and, on the scale of the Fourth International, "minimums" can be very small indeed)—are instructed to form armed detachments. These must not "remain content with general and abstract propaganda in this area," but must launch "pilot projects" and "initial actions" in armed struggle, aimed at inspiring the masses to take arms and enter into armed combat.

The method laid out in the Transitional Program for arming the masses (that of a party seeking to root itself in the masses, convincing them at the appropriate moments of the need for arms and taking the lead in the formation of workers' guards and similar formations) is distorted and implicitly denounced as spontaneist-insurrectionalist. The perspective of a mass insurrection is described as "mythical." The ability of the workers to arm themselves under the leadership of a revolutionary workers party is rejected out of hand.

The frequent appearance of military dictatorships in Latin America has inspired leading Trotskyists to rule out in reality the possibility of rooting our comrades in the mass movements, trade unions, etc.—except through armed actions mysteriously "linked" to these peripheral movements. In reality, the schema reduces even the trade

union struggle to a peripheral movement, relative to the "armed struggle."

These comrades no longer believe that our Latin American sections can be built in underground conditions, except through "armed struggle." The impossibility of party-building underground work under highly repressive regimes is a continual theme of its supporters in the branches. This not only deviates from our theory, but flies in the face of the experience of the Bolsheviks under czar, the PST in Argentina, and even the Bolivian POR under Barrientos (the most brutal of Bolivia's succession of dictators).

Simultaneously, IEC Majority spokespeople look askance at virtually all public party work except armed actions, associated communiques, and the very occasional issuance of a newspaper. Anything else, they seem to feel, opens our cadres up to certain extermination by the inevitable rightist coup. Comrade John S. in Brooklyn complained, for instance, that the Argentine PST maintains open, readily accessible bookstores (some even with *storefronts*) in Buenos Aires as well as several public headquarters in the capital city, and this in a "prerevolutionary situation." Apparently John S., et al., believe that public party work is appropriate only during times of relative class peace.

In addition, the IEC Majority regards—as Livio told us at the convention and as is hinted in the new resolution on Argentina—large-scale recruitment during an election campaign to be unprincipled.

2. A Weasel-worded Rejection of Work in the Army

The new line document projects a schema whereby work in the army is declared fruitless unless large-scale armed detachments already exist. Otherwise, according to the blueprint, all resistance in the army will be ruthlessly crushed. Like trade-union work or work in the student movement, work in the army thus becomes peripheral to creating the armed detachments. In the contractual language we have grown accustomed to in Mandel-Maitan-Frank documents, we read: "The necessary propaganda in the army must be matched by the strengthening of the armed detachments of the party and growing successes in the formation of armed detachments of the proletariat and poor peasantry."

All schemas for the development of the class struggle tend to be deadly but, in view of real Latin American experience, this is one of the deadliest. In Santo Domingo and Bolivia, rebellions by left or nationalist wings in the army played a key role in great revolutionary upsurges. In Santo Domingo, the military rebels armed the masses and held out against U. S. troops for two weeks.

If opportunities for revolutionary work exist in the army, such work should be carried out—whether or not the masses, not to mention the Trotskyist nuclei, are ready to form large-scale armed detachments. As Ernest Mandel noted at an earlier point in the discussion, the Bolivian bourgeoisie regarded the reunification of the army as its central task in crushing the mass upsurge. Doesn't that

indicate to us that work in the army has a certain importance of its own for a revolutionary party and was not merely peripheral to the formation of armed detachments?

Instead of receiving a Marxist orientation, the sections are warned that left sentiment in the army, prior to complete military readiness by the masses, "may even be the signal for a coup by the extreme right."

This displays the profound pessimism of the IEC Majority leaders on the possibility of preventing a rightist coup. They hold that this can be prevented, if at all, only by an already-existing revolutionary army. This schema blinds them to the little fact that right-wing coups were prevented in Bolivia and Santo Domingo by splits in the army that preceded the arming of the masses.

Revolutionary work in the army, as elsewhere, could have given these splits a class character which might have prevented the bourgeoisie and military leaders from regaining their balance. This was not a certainty but why, in the light of history, is it being rejected as a variant?

For those comrades who look for a *line* in this document, this section can only be read as a warning against "premature" work in the army.

How does this differ from the abstention from work in the army (coupled with calls for desertion) by the Argentine ERP and the Bolivian POR described in "Argentina and Bolivia—The Balance Sheet"?

3. *Prolonging the Resistance—A Third Period "Innovation"*

At the Ninth World Congress, armed struggle was presented as a tactic or strategy (its proponents weren't clear on which) for use during the *rise* of mass struggles. Now, the armed actions of the "vanguard" are explicitly proposed to counteract *defeats in the class struggle*. We are told in the document that when "effective struggle against this [military] dictatorship by semilegal, routine methods is completely insufficient [what "routine methods"? "Insufficient" for what?—FF], it is perfectly legitimate to prolong the resistance against the threat posed by the dictatorship through armed resistance in the form of guerrilla struggle."

This teaching, credited to Fidel Castro, had earlier proponents. After the debacle of the 1925-27 revolution in China, Stalin ordered the Communist Party to engage in armed struggle to "prolong the resistance" after the workers and peasants had sustained a crushing defeat at the hands of Chiang. Stalin ordered an insurrection in Canton and later the formation of peasant armies. All of these led to disaster. (It should be remembered that the vaunted "long march" of the CP was a succession of defeats and not a victory.)

The real tasks facing the vanguard in China were to regroup the cadres in terribly difficult underground conditions, to evaluate and criticize the course followed during the upsurge, and to patiently rebuild the party and its links to the masses. Instead, the vanguard was further scattered, beheaded, and demoralized by artificial attempts to reverse damage already done.

Stalin's ultraleft policy became part of the ultraleft Third Period, during which Stalinism further consolidated its grip on the Soviet state and the Comintern parties. Have the IEC Majority comrades changed their evaluation of the Third Period?

One country for which this policy of "prolonging the resistance" is often projected is Chile. Here, grand predictions are frequently made about the prospects of the

Chilean resistance, echoing those in the Maoist, ultraleft, and pro-Moscow press. Let me state frankly: unless all the *facts* about Chile that have appeared in the workers' press, the bourgeois press, and the press of our sections is false, the policy of "prolonging the resistance" in Chile would be as disastrous as it was in China. It would be suicidal for the remaining vanguard elements, and demoralizing for the already battered masses.

The working class has been dealt a brutal defeat. That is the bitter reality. It was deserted by its reformist leaders at a decisive stage of the class struggle. The class and its allies have been substantially thrown back. No small group of avengers—no Trotskyist section transformed into a "pilot project" for armed action—can reverse this defeat. This will take time, the assimilation of key lessons by the masses (including the inefficacy of class-collaborationist, peaceful road methods), and the rebuilding of a revolutionary vanguard party, not the wasteful adventures dictated by the IEC Majority schema.

The masses—bitter and somewhat demoralized—may well feel sympathy and "understand" the assassination of this or that general-executioner, the bombing of imperialist firms, or other heroic acts of defiance. But these actions offer no openings for them to resume the struggle against the ruling class, create no new revolutionary party, and teach them no revolutionary lessons. We cannot assume that the victory of a brutal military dictatorship automatically destroys all reformist and democratic illusions in the masses.

But, above all, we cannot fall prey to the illusion that real setbacks in the class struggle can be turned around even partially by a tiny vanguard "linking" themselves to the masses by means of communiqués.

Let's not place any Canton insurrections on the record of the Trotskyist movement. We have been small for many decades and frustration is understandable in view of our grandiose tasks, but we must always recognize (even if ultraleft youth and Stalinist bureaucrats do not) that victory and defeat are decided by the real clash of real classes and not by "pilot projects." *It is not leadership acting on its own that can solve the historical crisis of humanity, but leadership organized into a party, rooted in and winning its place at the head of the working class and its allies in struggle.*

4. *Adopting (While Pretending to Reject) the "Spark" Theory of Revolution*

The new line document on armed struggle claims to reject "the illusion . . . that the action of limited nuclei, determined to take military initiatives, can represent a motor force of the revolutionary struggle. . . ." I believe that the majority of the cadres of the Fourth International do reject this concept but the document of the IEC Majority "Tendency" most assuredly does not. In fact, it is codified in the resolution.

Early in the document, the sections are instructed to "undertake initial pilot-projects, to enter into initial actions that are carefully calculated for the effect they can have in increasing the combativity of the masses and their will and capacity for arming themselves." The armed detachments of the party, we are told, "must fill the precise function of preparing, facilitating, propelling, and accelerating the arming of a broader and broader vanguard of workers and peasants."

Not only does the party inspire the armament of the masses by arming itself and undertaking "pilot projects," but it is possible that the masses themselves need never be armed at all but only a "broader and broader vanguard." This would seem to raise the question as to just who makes the revolution—the broad vanguard, the party, or the masses—as well as what the "motor" of the revolution is. It appears to me that this document sees the broad vanguard as the force that will smash the repressive apparatus. The party armed detachments will act as the "motor" of this process by setting the example of arming itself and carrying out "pilot projects" and "initial actions."

But there is a much more explicit expression of the spark theory in the document. The resolution states, "guerrilla war as a tactic is successful if . . . it fuses with a new rise of the masses resulting from the stimulating effects guerrilla war has had on them." In other words, the goal of guerrilla warfare is to "stimulate" (an evasion of the real, but discredited, meaning: "spark") the mass movement.

Indeed, it is neither objective conditions, nor the correct work of a revolutionary party *in* the mass movements that creates the new upsurge, but the autonomous action of the vanguard armed detachments. The masses are aroused to action by the vanguard's deeds of derring-do and, after presumably searching for the source of this mysterious "stimulation," the masses adopt the vanguard as their leaders instead of the existing bureaucracies. This despite the fact that these leaders will not be primarily challenged by the party from within the organizations of the masses, but fundamentally from the outside by the "pilot projects" and "initial actions."

We should remember that advocates of the "spark" theory *never* rejected mobilizing the masses. They had a specific technique for doing it—the technique proposed by the IEC Majority "Tendency."

5. *The Class Line Gets Harder to Find*

Trotskyists have always been the firmest and clearest defenders of a working-class line in the struggle for power as against all forms of class collaboration. Our recognition of the need for armed struggle to overcome the resistance of the capitalists to a socialist revolution *flows* from our understanding that *any form of class collaboration between workers and capitalists on the road to socialism is impossible.*

Today, the pressure of the "new" vanguardist orientation, and the attempt to throw our parties into the task of armed insurrection before they have even come into existence as real parties, is beginning to undermine a clear class line and to encourage a search for gimmicks by which the revolutionary leadership can take power, arms in hand, even if a little hanky-panky with bourgeois or reformist forces is necessary to get the job done. An example was the Frente Revolucionario Anti-imperialista, a coalition for "armed struggle" in which bourgeois militarists participated. The ERP, before bidding farewell to the Fourth International, began to indulge in similar deviations.

Yet, the new resolution on "The Political Crisis and Perspectives for Argentina" (IIDB, Vol. X, No. 21), while it does not explicitly endorse multiclass coalitions for power, is strangely vague and unclear about the tradi-

tional Trotskyist position on these formations. This is all the more disturbing since its authors once knew how to defend this position rather well. Here is what they write (page 7):

"It follows from this that we must reject any perspective of an alliance with the national bourgeoisie or any of its progressive sectors." This is a good—and traditional—start but it is modified in an obscure manner:

"The workers and revolutionary movement must not, of course, fail to exploit the tactical advantages offered by the enemy's contradictions. In the case of a reactionary dictatorship, for example, it cannot exclude the possibility that bourgeois organizations or movements may take part in the opposition struggle. But this by no means implies that bourgeois layers or political formations can be considered allies from a revolutionary standpoint."

This is not a call for the formation of more FRAs or PRGs or similar multiclass formations which seek power through armed struggle, but it does not clearly reject them either. The document is vague where it is most necessary to be clear.

Let us remember that the Vietnamese Stalinists also recognize (in their theoretical apologies) the non-revolutionary character of bourgeois layers and formations, but call for alliances with them in the opposition struggle for power. The vague formulation of the IEC Majority could lead sections to believe that such alliances for power are legitimate, especially if the bourgeois forces are relatively weak or willing to throw in a little more radical rhetoric to satisfy the higher expectations of Trotskyist participants in such fronts.

We have learned to expect the worst variant when it comes to puzzling out the verbal imprecisions and vagueness of the IEC Majority leaders. That is why I think this ambiguous formulation needs to be discussed further. The refusal of these leaders to designate Chile's Unidad Popular or the French Union of the Left as popular front-type formations further adds to my concern.

Does the IEC Majority reject coalitions with bourgeois elements for armed struggle? Does it reject Trotskyist participation in such coalitions even if they formally adopt "socialism" as a goal or are dominated by reformist forces? Or is the IEC Majority merely ambling into revisionism while the more energetic former comrades of the PRT preferred to run?

6. *A Vanguardist Theory of Revolution Breeds a Vanguardist Theory of the State*

In Richard Mitten's document, "In Defense of the International Majority's Perspectives for Latin America" (SWP Discussion Bulletin, Volume 31, No. 35), a revisionist theory of the state was presented as a foundation stone of the IEC Majority's line on Latin America. According to Mitten, the state consists only of special bodies of armed men—repressive forces—and if the bourgeois repressive forces are smashed, a workers state exists regardless of who owns the means of production. Hence, Mitten held that Cuba was a workers state from the moment Castro's rebels marched into the cities in 1959. Any other theory, Mitten claims, represents a "peaceful transition to socialism." Mitten attempts to treat the Trotskyist theory of the state as a sinister SWP innovation but, of course, since he is a student of the subject, I'm quite sure he knows better.

The Trotskyist view has been a more dialectical one

than that advanced by Mitten. We hold that *both* the smashing of the capitalist repressive apparatus and government *and* the overturn of capitalist property relations are necessary for the creation of a workers state. We have defended this dialectical approach against deviations in both directions. In 1965, Joseph Hansen defended this theory against Livio Maitan, who held that extensive nationalizations might lead to Nasser's Egypt becoming a workers state without the smashing of the old repressive apparatus and government. In 1961, Hansen also contended against those who thought Cuba became a workers state in 1959, before the overturn of capitalist property relations.

In our view, Cuba became a workers state in the fall of 1960, when the key means of production were nationalized in a series of sweeping measures accompanied by giant mass mobilizations. Prior to this the Cuban revolutionary government was designated a "workers and farmers government." This is the name given to a radical petty-bourgeois regime which comes to power in the wake of the smashing of the capitalist repressive forces. Although such a regime rests on capitalist state foundations, it undertakes radical anticapitalist measures which *may* lead to the triumph of the revolution by creating a workers state.

We define the state, as Trotsky did, by the "forms of property and productive relations which the given state guards and defends" and not merely by the existence of specific repressive forces. The source of power of the capitalist class—their ownership of the means of production—can only be broken by nationalizing the means of production and making them the *property of the state*. *State property* is the specific form of working-class property relations in the period of transition between capitalism and socialism. The working class cannot and does not rule unless it commands the means of production through its state. This dialectical approach was once held in common by Hansen, Mandel, Frank, and others. (See, for instance, comments by Germain and Frank in "Report and Discussion on the Third Chinese Revolution," International Information Bulletin, December 1952.)

Mitten's theory obviously has great appeal for vanguardists and those inclined to variants of putschism. According to this theory, a *rebel leadership in power is itself a dictatorship of the proletariat* regardless of the social relations that exist.

Trotskyists, on the other hand, take the overturn of social relations as the deciding moment. This has always required (even in Cuba, China, and Eastern Europe) *substantial involvement of the working class itself in the expropriation of the bosses*. If this is irrelevant to the creation of a workers state, then the working class itself is irrelevant to the process.

By reducing the struggle for a workers state to the smashing of the old police and army, Mitten effectively reduces the political task of mobilizing the masses against capitalism to the military task of defeating one aspect of the capitalist state. Programmatic questions become qualitatively less important.

For instance, why not ally with the bourgeois left militarists and the reformists in a programmatic front like the Bolivian FRA, if this increases your access to arms or offers other momentary military advantages? Participation in election campaigns becomes irrelevant because

exposure of the bourgeois and reformist parties is irrelevant and sometimes even an obstacle to an all-out fight against the army and police. A transitional program for mobilizing the masses becomes reduced to a military tactic or is thrown overboard entirely.

Above all, the goal of the preparatory period becomes transformed from the building of a revolutionary party to the creation of a revolutionary army.

The appeal of this theory to a small Trotskyist vanguard, in an epoch of great revolutionary possibilities, is obvious. It allows them to leap over the difficult stage of building a party with a clear class program and deep roots in the mass movement. It allows them to skip over the complicated struggle with the bourgeoisie, the Stalinists, and the reformists for hegemony in the working class. A large enough armed force, like Mao's or Castro's, is all we need. It offers impatient youth the illusion that the vanguard can actually make the revolution and let the masses in on it afterwards, or at the culminating "phase."

This theory takes the post-World War II social overturns, idealizes them, and generalizes them as a pattern for the future. It can only lead to disaster for the Trotskyist movement and for the world revolution as well. While a sizable hunk of territory has been removed from capitalist rule without a conscious revolutionary leadership since 1945, the bulk of the colonial world, as well as the advanced capitalist nations, remain to be liberated. And the capitalists have learned many lessons from the post-war period, as a look at their tactics in Vietnam, Santo Domingo, and Algeria as compared with their tactics in Cuba will show.

Experience has shown that this world process can only be carried out, in all three sectors of the world revolution, by a mass revolutionary Marxist party using the strategy and method of the Transitional Program. We cannot become hypnotized by the detours that have occurred and thus give up our central task.

In my opinion, the theory of the state advanced by Mitten (and now found in the China resolution of the IEC Majority "Tendency") can only function as a rationalization for doing just that—giving up the fight to build a Trotskyist International in favor of adventures and opportunist adaptations. [See articles in SWP Discussion Bulletin Vol. 31, Nos. 24 and 33 and IIDB Volume X, No. 15 for a fuller discussion of this question.]

7. *Hedging So That the Leaders Can Blame the Ranks*

The line of the document "On the Question of Armed Struggles in Latin America," is clear beyond mistake. It is in contradiction to the building of mass revolutionary parties. It is in contradiction to the method and contents of the Transitional Program. It is in contradiction to a proletarian orientation. If the line is approved, parties that hold to the Transitional Program and a proletarian orientation like the PST will continue to be harried by the IEC Majority leaders for allegedly violating "democratic centralism."

But Trotskyist organizations that carry out the real orientation of the document are forewarned: You may fare no better than the PST in your relations with the IEC Majority leaders—indeed, you may fare worse. For they have carefully constructed the document so as to *blame the sections* for its disastrous consequences.

The document includes a series of literally impenetrable "self-criticisms" of the 1969 resolution, which actually criticize nothing in particular. Presumably, these "self-criticisms" are to help guide the work of the sections. But just what is being criticized, and just what is to replace it, is anybody's guess. A section will never know, until it is told by one of the official interpreters, when it is "failing to assimilate" one of these murky "self-criticisms."

Further, after clearly instructing the sections to create armed groupings and to carry out armed "initial actions" and "pilot projects," the ranks are then directed to take these actions without "undermining the party's accomplishment of its tasks in the realm of penetrating the working class, doing trade-union work, carrying out propaganda and agitation, and continuing the consolidation and strengthening of the organization as such." They are solemnly warned against fetishizing guerrilla struggle. Orders are given to combine the "strategy of armed struggle" with the "struggle for the Transitional Program as a whole." (The contradiction between the resolution's proposed strategy of armed struggle and the Transitional Program is a problem the sections are left to work out for themselves.)

All of these tasks must be accomplished while "prolonging the resistance" to the inevitable rightist military coups. There are strictures about the need for the workers to "understand" the "necessity" for the section to engage in guerrilla warfare. (How this understanding is to be measured is unclear, since mass readiness to participate in armed activities is not a criterion.)

These formidable tasks are to be carried out as soon as the section has passed an undefined "minimum threshold of cadre accumulation." This is a rather hefty set of duties for a "minimum" to undertake, even if they weren't mutually contradictory. In effect, the document calls upon the sections to bend themselves into the shape of a pretzel while spreading out in all directions.

But while this list of tasks tacked onto the central military orientation is totally impossible for any section to carry out, the strictures play a useful role for the leaders of the IEC Majority "Tendency"—specifically Mandel, Maitan, and Frank.

Any section that carries out the main line—"armed struggle"—but fails to achieve the acrobatic miracle required by the other tasks, can be accused of *not carrying out the real line*. This course will not be adopted as long as the leaders can bask in the reflected glory of spectacular "pilot-projects." But this charge will surely be made if the inevitable deviations of a section pursuing this line promise to cause an embarrassing scandal for the leaders.

Similarly, the seemingly contradictory statements on work in the army and "stimulating the masses" also allow

Mandel, Maitan, and Frank some leeway to separate themselves from any section that finds itself in a politically ambiguous position because of loyalty to their line.

It should be noted that only two sections—the former official Argentine section and the Bolivian POR—went all out to carry out the Ninth World Congress resolution on Latin America. Both came in for substantial—and rather sharp—criticism in the IEC Majority resolutions on Bolivia and Argentina. (The Argentine PRT, of course, eventually followed the line of the Ninth World Congress right out of the Fourth International.)

What we have here, it appears, is a line so brilliant, so complicated, so rounded, so very "dialectical," so super-subtle in its implications, that the mere mortals in the line of fire can only be expected to fumble the job. The sections which carried out the guerrilla warfare line of 1969 are taken to task—as similar sections will be in the future—for failing to fulfill the inspired vision of the central leaders.

These leaders tell us in their documents: if problems exist in the sections, our crude followers are to blame, and certainly not the budding geopoliticians in Brussels, Paris, and Rome. Surely, it is not the fault of Mandel, Maitan, and Frank that they have developed a political line so profound that no one can be found to correctly put it into practice. And so the resolutions of the IEC Majority "Tendency" slap the sections on the wrist, send them home, and tell them, "This time, *do it right!*"

Perhaps it would be a good idea if, instead of plunging into the frays laid out for them by the IEC Majority leaders, the Latin American sections reacted to these hedged-in document writers the way James P. Cannon responded more than twenty-five years ago to the "theses" of the German IKD:

"They were awfully long theses—and those people demanded we carry them out right away. I said, 'No, no. First, I haven't read them; second, I don't understand them; third, I don't agree with them. And fourth, if you are so smart that you can write stuff I can't understand, you are just too damn smart for our party.'"

In any event, the blame for the revisionist deviations in Latin America should be put where it belongs: on the shoulders of the IEC Majority leadership. It is they and not those who executed their line—the Bolivian section or heroic and dedicated ultralefts like Comrade Santucho—who must be held responsible.

The line of the IEC Majority "Tendency" must be rejected while the damage done to our movement can still be contained, some of the lost ground regained, and a fresh start made in the building of a Trotskyist International.

December 3, 1973

THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY— INSTRUMENT OR GOAL

by Fred Feldman, Brooklyn Branch, New York Local

Some supporters of the IEC Majority Tendency have challenged the methodology of the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction for fetishizing the concept of the Leninist party. According to them, the LTF forgets that the party is merely an "instrument" while the goal is the socialist revolution. In making this seemingly profound comment, they apparently aim at accusing the party of adopting the method of the reformist Bernstein who held that "the movement is everything, the goal nothing."

Of course the party has as its goal the accomplishment of the socialist revolution. But our scientific knowledge and the experience of the entire epoch of imperialist decay have convinced us that the revolutionary international party, rooted in the masses, with strong sections in each country, is the *indispensable instrument* for achieving that goal. This means that, in the present situation, where the revolutionary Marxist forces are limited to small nuclei, the building of the party necessarily becomes the central *goal* of our movement. This *goal* flows from the party's role as *indispensable instrument* for the achievement of the socialist goal on a world scale. Yes, the LTF holds that, at this time, the central *goal* of the Fourth International must be the creation of this instrument.

Why are some comrades who support the IEC Majority faction attempting to reduce the party to an instrument rather than the goal of the International?

There is an important force driving them to treat the

party as "instrument" rather than "goal" in this period. It reflects their growing agnosticism and doubt about whether the party *really is the indispensable instrument* of the socialist revolution. Perhaps, they suspect, some other instrument will do just as well, especially in view of the relative weakness of the party-instrument at this time. Perhaps, they suspect, new "adequate instruments" (the new mass vanguard, the ERP, the Chilean MIR, Fraccion Roja) are being thrown up by the post-1968 upsurge in world revolution.

Only such agnosticism (if not outright rejection) of the *indispensable* character of party building justifies this phony distinction between the party as "instrument" of the revolution and the party as "goal" of the current work of the Fourth International.

Methodologically, this approach harks back to those, like Burnham (or the authors of "The Mote and the Beam"), for whom all principled questions (such as the necessity of a party), demonstrated by the history of the whole epoch, are always up for grabs in the light of the latest "experience."

To repeat, the *goal* of the LTF is the world socialist revolution. The *indispensable instrument* of that revolution is the existence of mass revolutionary parties that remain to be created. Therefore, the *goal* of the LTF is the construction of those parties.

December 4, 1973