

STATEMENT OF RESIGNATION from the S.W.P.
April 9, 1966

Seattle, Washington

It is a tribute to the genius of Leon Trotsky that the movement he founded could survive in the U.S. so long after his death, during two long decades of prosperity, world domination and relative quiescence in the working class.

Nevertheless, the once proud SWP, the hallmark of international solidarity and revolutionary intransigence, has become a movement eroded in program and perspective. The events of the past few months, culminating in the February Plenum of the National Committee, constitute a nodal point in a long process of political decline.

The degeneration of the SWP majority is acutely revealed in the utter lack of theory and conjunctural analysis which marks its approach. The method of the majority is eclectic impressionism, and the policies, flowing from this are sterile and contradictory, resulting in false positions on the Negro struggle, the key domestic problem of the era, and on China, the key international problem of the revolutionary movement.

Incapable of any economic evaluation of the current status of U.S. imperialism, the majority's domestic politics consist of a flirtation with reformism on the issue of the Vietnamese war, and a view of the coming upsurge of labor as a "single-issue" type of process, connected to no other social struggles extant or developing -- such as the Negro struggle, women's rights, youth and the poverty-stricken.

The majority's strategic preoccupation with the trade unions as the exclusive medium of social transformation expresses itself in a conservative sectarianism towards the protracted ideological ferment in both old and new radical circles, as well as in a hardened contempt for the efforts of women and youth to emancipate themselves from oppression.

Just as the SLP petrified around the conjunctural evaluations of the 19th century Marxists, so the SWP has ossified around its conjunctural evaluations of 25 years ago. It is today either oblivious or wrong about the main political problems and needs of our epoch.

We have sought to offset the degeneration by a series of struggles on central political questions.

I. The Negro Struggle.

For 15 years, our tendency has pressed for theoretical clarity on this central question of the American revolution. We have urged that a deep analysis of a unique phenomenon replace the present policy of super-imposing the doctrine of European nationalism upon the Negro question here.

In a series of documents presented for internal party discussion (particularly three convention Resolutions on the Negro Struggle in 1957 and 1963 by Kirk, and the Kirk-Kaye Political Resolution in 1965), we have emphasized the objectively revolutionary nature of the Negro struggle as it is, and we have labelled its course as "Revolutionary Integration."

A powerful Negro cadre might have been built around this program, for it provided the basis for meaningful intervention into the southern struggle, the civil rights movement in the North the ghetto battles, and the growing ideological controversy raging in the Negro movement today.

But the party majority insured that none of these documents were discussed objectively in the party. When the central leadership condescended to reply at all, it was principally with falsification and caricature of our position, spiced with organizational villifications.

When, in 1957, we criticized the majority's uncritical adaptation to Rev. King and to pacifism, we were accused of over-estimating the independence of the Negro struggle. When, in 1963, we opposed the overadaptation to Mr. Muhammad and the glorification of separatism, we were accused of being white so-called radicals or liberal reformists who under-estimated the independence of the struggle. For our part, we considered the party line opportunist and tail-endist in both instances.

The majority is responsible for a series of unprecedented disasters in its relations with the Negro movement, defeats that have completely isolated the party from the key upsurge of our time and yet have never been explained. Today, with the southern movement in deep programmatic crisis, and the northern ghetto on the verge of explosions which will rock American society to its foundations, the party has less contact with, understanding of, of orientation to this struggle than at any time in the past 25 years.

The self-confidence of the party in its ability to alter its racial composition has accordingly been shattered. THE SWP HAS BECOME CRYSTALLIZED AS AN ESSENTIALLY WHITE PARTY, and it lacks the impetus to alter this condition.

It bequeaths the Negro struggle to the petty bourgeois nationalists and the middle-class tokenists, thereby cutting the party off from the rescussitating effects of the class struggle and deepening its withdrawal from reality.

The SWP now presents the ludicrous spectacle of a lily-white party with a program of ultra-black nationalism. The adulation of the Muslims has opened a Pandora's box of violations of elementary working class principles: SWP spokesmen now justify the nationalists' discrimination against women, their anti-Semitism, and their collaboration with fascists.

Finally, it is the majority which adapts theoretically to the liberals on the Negro question. Perhaps the last act in the tragedy of the SWP and the Negro struggle was Comrade Camejo's pseudo-historical, pseudo-economic YSA Bulletin article where he categorically stated that the bourgeoisie will implant Northern-style democracy in the South.

This proposition has only been implied in party Resolutions since 1957; now it is doctrine, and nothing could be better calculated to promote the absolute alienation of the party from the Negro struggle than this categorical denial of the permanent revolutionary character of the Negro struggle for integration.

This overestimation of the vitality of the bourgeoisie, endowing it with a revolutionary vigor it was unable to summon even during Reconstruction, is the result of the method of economic determinism, and it will lead to further ideological retreats on fundamental questions of American politics.

II. The Colonial Revolution

We have called for political solidarity with the Chinese Revolution. Despite bureaucratic deformations and Stalinist baggage, it is the key to the colonial revolution and a central axis of revolutionary politics throughout the world. But the SWP has cut itself off from relating to the dynamics of this great revolution.

Just as the majority mechanically transfers European nationalism to the Negro question in the USA, so it exports Stalinist degeneration in the Soviet Union over to revolutionary China, and concludes with the strategy of political revolution in China.

Instead of concrete socio-analysis, inapropos labels like "Stalinist" are pasted over the Chinese regime and the SWP conducts a frantic search for every apparent Stalinist-type devia-

tion in Maoist policy and practice. The dialectic of a living revolution that has evolved into ever-intensifying opposition to the Kremlin is totally ignored, and in place of enthusiasm we are offered scorn.

In Cuba, on the other hand, the superficial evaluation of Castro's attack on Trotskyism, Gilly, China, etc., reveals the tendency of the majority leadership to cling to Castro as to life-preserver, ignoring the obvious basic shift to the right and toward the Soviet bureaucracy. The job of class analysis and solidarity with the Latin American proletariat against Castro's shift is left to the Chinese leadership and to -- Healy.

III. Vietnam

The current attack upon the Kirk-Kaye tendency results directly from our advocacy of a proletarian anti-war policy that would solidarize the party with the revolution in Vietnam, with the working class Negro youth who are key victims of the draft in the U.S., and with the leftwing of the anti-war movement.

As we stated in our letter rejecting the National Committee's censure of Kirk for having the audacity to attempt a discussion of party anti-war policy, "We sought to bring about a critical consideration of the strategy and tactics employed at the Thanksgiving NCC conference in Washington, D.C., where YSA and SWP, by insisting on a "single-issue" oriented movement, served to arrest the radicalization of the new left and effectively isolated themselves from the revolutionary wing of the southern Negro struggle.

"We also opposed their sectarian insistence on forcing all conference activity to circulate around a purely organizational struggle to isolate the independents in a new organization, when the burning responsibility for YSA and SWP was to conduct a clear political struggle against a SANE - liberal - C.P. conspiracy to disorient the anti-war movement."

SWP policy is divorced from any economic and social analysis of the current crisis of U.S. capitalism. We have maintained that the capitalist class has a fundamental stake in this particular war, and will not quit short of military/political defeat in Vietnam, or virtual civil war at home.

The majority calls for "withdrawal" as against "negotiations" are obviously correct. But under cover of this lurks the essentially pacifist proposition that the anti-war movement can, with its own forces, pressure the U.S. out of Vietnam. And it is a fundamental of Trotskyism that pacifism, translated into political terms, is reformism.

This flight from Marxism takes place when the vanguard elements in the anti-war movement and in the new left are groping for fundamental solutions to social problems, seeking to unite Negro freedom fighters, the poverty-stricken, the opposition to the draft, and the anti-war movement in one broad political movement against the war. The SWP turns the radicalization of the new left over to the C.P. and to the pacifists, and thus to the Democrats, and then lauds its own "realistic" aloofness from the burning problems of the anti-war movement.

It is a typical majority slander that we advise the party to turn its back on the student movement in favor of the Negro movement. We urge the revolutionary youth to struggle for political leadership on the campuses. However, the militant students whom we lead must be encouraged in their groping for alliance with the proletariat, and in their growing feeling that only the workers have the capacity to stop this particular war. Anti-war youth must turn toward the working class -- and specifically toward the Negroes, who are that section of the class already in motion.

The SWP's "single-issue" gimmick is a false answer to a false posing of the movement's problems, and it acts in life as a conservative barrier to the political maturation of young militants.

IV. The Regeneration of Socialist Thought

Our tendency quickly grasped the significance of Krushev's exposure of Stalin, and Seattle Branch had singular success with its campaign to recruit dissident CPers to Trotskyism.

But the SWP majority was unprepared to discuss two of the burning questions confronting the advanced CP cadres: C.P. policy of Negro self-determination, and the Chinese challenge to the Soviet bureaucracy. The SWP could not, therefore, intervene with full effectiveness in the internecine struggle in the Communist milieu and could not stimulate a national leftwing in the C.P.

As a result, the fruit of regroupment work belongs to other organizations. PL has grabbed off a leftwing of the CP. Spartacist has a leftwing of the S.P. And a whole galaxy of centrist-type youth and adult tendencies has appeared.

We have tried to orient the party toward this general leftward stream emerging under the impulse of world events, but the party pretends that no such large and fluid milieu exists. The SWP is still mired in the Holding Operation, which is a prolonged state of suspension based upon the assumption that nothing significant can really happen until the regeneration of the trade unions and the emergence of the Labor Party.

Chained to the fixed idea that the SWP is automatically ordained as the leadership of the future, the majority is in the grip of a conservative sectarianism which views all new socialist formations and developments with hostility from the very outset. The organizational flexibility of the old Cannonism is junked and a rigid enmity to all new 'competition' ensues.

And yet, without the intervention of Trotskyism, the new currents will stop short of revolutionary Marxism and will petrify in centrism.

V. The Woman Question

Ours is the only tendency in the history of American Trotskyism to place the struggle for women's emancipation on the level of a first rate theoretical and programatic question. We have vainly resisted the creeping paralysis of male supremacy which now is a central doctrine and ingrained practice in the party.

The party's capitulation to sex chauvanism has been a long-standing scandal in the SWP periphery, and that it has not been noticed and exposed by our opponents is only a commentary on the general backwardness of socialist thought in this country.

The party is now committed to its point-blank refusal to undertake the special indicated effort that would tap the enormous potential of revolutionary energy among oppressed and doubly-exploited women.

The central party leadership is essentially hostile to women leaders, as well as to anyone who considers Second Sexhood to be a political and organizational issue. Both the letter and spirit of Bolshevism on this question are alien to the SWP leadership.

VI. Youth

Indoctrinated in political sectarianism and organizational fetichism, the party youth, largely deprived of any working class background or experience, are further deprived by the party of a solid theoretical training, and they accordingly move ahead even faster than the older cadres on the road toward careerism, maneuverism, organizational manipulations, monolithic structure, and contempt for theory, history and principled politics.

Many of these young middle-class intellectuals would be inspired and educated to become worker-Bolsheviks. Instead, their pragmatism and cautiousness are fanned by the rigidity and conservatism of the central leadership.

As the younger comrades proceed to assume increasing control

of the party apparatus, the SWP will soon become as unrecognizable to others as it is to us today, for the youth are encouraged to exaggerate the very worst features of the party.

The best of the youth, those with a truly revolutionary ardor and understanding, will not be able to survive in the stifling, narrow, and mechanistic confines of the party. The SWP is dooming the best of today's radical youth to disorientation and eventual demoralization.

VII. The Organization Question

For some fifteen years -- since Comrades Dobbs & Kerry organized the Seattle Cochranites for an unprincipled organizational assault against the local leadership -- we have well realized the pre-eminence the majority attaches to organizational matters.

Nevertheless, we have persistently presented our political ideas to the party, entering into discussions wherever possible, but devoting the overwhelming bulk of our time and thought to year-in, year-out party building and branch activity. We helped organize branches for co-thinkers, kept the SWP on the local and national ballot, made Trotskyism a living reality with an unbroken tradition in the Pacific Northwest, and built what may well be the most consistently active and flourishing proletarian branch in the party over a twenty-year period.

Armed with the traditions of the movement and seeking to preserve them, we made politics central and organizational questions secondary, refusing to be provoked by the constant attempt of the majority to undermine our position by organizational harassment, personal slander and intricate maneuverism. So long as the possibility of free exchange of views existed, we kept the doors open for discussion by minimizing all administrative and secondary assault.

But precisely as the political degeneration of the leadership accelerated, its intolerance of oppositional ideas intensified. (See SWP Discussion Bulletin No. 14, Vol. 25, "Radical Laborism Versus Bolshevik Leadership," by Kirk and Kaye, 1965). Despite all our strenuous efforts, it has been impossible to obtain a climate of principled politics. Every political dispute and discussion is muddied and prejudiced by organizational smoke-screen grievances, threats, frame-ups around "security" claims, blatant falsification of oppositional ideas, and the incessant grinding-out of N.O.-inspired corridor gossip.

Our tendency stood for proletarian democracy in the party, for the right of minority representation on leading bodies, and

for a comradely exchange of ideas. The majority's position is that the majority IS the party and that a minority is inherently anti-party, dangerous, diseased and intolerable, and must be driven out. All opposition is treated factionally, and all factions are reduced to the status of outlaws.

The central leadership has become a peculiar anti-political clique which has consolidated its control of the apparatus by driving out all dissidents, critics, and potential critics within the leadership, engineered parallel purges in the ranks, and is now attaching itself to a predominantly petty-bourgeois student social base.

To answer critics, the majority refuses analytical argument and simply reiterates doctrine, thereby demonstrating that the SWP has become essentially a doctrinaire party without any internal ideological life in the full meaning of the term.

Trotskyism in the SWP image has become transformed into a graven image.

Loyalty to the leadership has assumed the proportions of cultism. The cult has taken form in the majority caucus, which now comprises virtually the entire SWP and is maintained for the sole purpose of preventing open discussion in the party. It merges comrades of many and varying political positions around the central issue of organizational loyalty to the regime. It is thus a totally unprincipled bloc.

The recent Plenum displayed the ultimate absurdity of this clique operation. There was in the entire Plenum only one openly dissenting voice -- Kirk's. Yet the P.C. found it necessary to eliminate one whole Plenum session in order to substitute for it -- a majority caucus! And all basic decisions were made there rather than at the Plenum where Kirk was allowed to be present (so he could be censured!)

Such a ridiculous practice makes frank, open and honest discussion of differences patently impossible. But it flows clearly from the 1965 Organizational Resolution, which climaxed the party descent into shameless anti-Bolshevism on the question of party organization.

Future of the S.W.P.

Is the SWP irretrievably decayed? Is the degenerative process irreversible?

We do not know. We wholeheartedly hope not. The long and honorable record compiled by the party of anti-capitalist principle, plus the tremendous dynamism of the Trotsky heritage and the Cannon interventionism into the living struggle wherever it broke through, created a cadre with essentially working class and revolutionary reflexes. But these reflexes became paralyzed by the fetich of loyalty to the leadership and the concomitant horror of any criticism of the leadership.

In the future, some social force outside the party might jolt the majority enough to jar it out of its sublime complacency. But for now, the party will neither intervene publically with ideology nor discuss objectively the unsolved problems of the American Revolution.

Our Course

Considering the present insupportable circumstances, we cannot waste any more of our time and resources in trying to avoid the running organizational hunt-and-kill game which the majority imposes upon us as the price of our remaining in the party.

The Plenum decision to censure Kirk for non-existent "crimes" and then to investigate them, and the P.C.'s announcement that the Seattle Branch's protest against and rejection of the censure was "inauthentic," "anonymous," and therefore unreal, telegraphs the determination of the P.C. to destroy the Seattle Branch and rid the party of any general critics of the leadership.

At a time when Seattle Branch was preparing for the International Days of Protest, working in two local CEWVs, anticipating a Northwest Conference of the anti-war movement, involved in a northern trip which we were invited to make by co-thinkers, active in trying to cement a viable local African defense committee, planning a new forum series, etc., etc., etc. -- it has been unceasingly barraged by the Center as the leadership escalates its deliberate sabotage of our daily party-building work.

Still, despite everything, under different conditions we might still try to remain in the party founded by Trotsky and developed by Cannon. But the SWP is no longer the epicenter of revolutionary activity and ideology in the U.S. Its estrangement from the Negro struggle and its refusal to intervene rationally and politically in the anti-war movement, or in the present rebirth of interest in socialist thought, have destroyed its chance, for this period to secure ideological hegemony over the non-Stalinist left -- a necessary first step toward political hegemony over the class.

This opportunity was presented to the party by the 20th Congress and the following period of regroupment, rising colonial revolution, the Sino-Soviet conflict, and the international crisis of capitalism. But the leadership has squandered its capital and clearly announces that it is not interested in creating today the basis of the party of the American Revolution. That is always for manana.

We hope to be able to intervene in the viable political currents all around us today. Outside the SWP, and without programmatic affinity for any other existing party, we may not be able to demonstrably prove the superiority of our policies. Yet we intend to intervene. Freed from the persecutory mania of the SWP we will do what we can to further the principles of Trotskyism in those arenas where the SWP is unwilling or unable to intervene politically. Some Trotskyists must try to publicize and promote our rich heritage of thought, especially when so many doors in the mass movement today are swinging open, all over the country.

Summary

We have clear political differences with the regime on the questions of the Negro struggle, the colonial revolution, the Vietnamese war, regroupment, woman's emancipation, and party organizational principles. We have a different appraisal of the import and nature of the present conjuncture, and a different strategic perspective on the unfolding of the American Revolution.

We do not consider these differences fundamentally incompatible with party membership.

The majority, however, so considers them, and will not let us live and function in the party we built.

The majority also exploits our very existence as a minority tendency to pressure everybody else into line. They thus force us to play the objective role of helping to cement the anti-democratic and anti-political leadership clique.

We therefore consider it our responsibility to resign our memberships in the SWP and put an end to the otherwise unending organizational farce played by the Center against its internal opponents, against the principles of the movement, and particularly against the needs and interests of the burgeoning radical movement in the U.S.

We are resigning in protest against the kind of a party the SWP has become. We are resigning because we see no realistic chance of being allowed to even criticize it.

We hope that some day the SWP will find its road cleared for the historic return to the method of Leninism in theory, program, tactics and party life.

* * * * *

Seattle Branch SWP:

Fred Berg
Jim Curcio
Minota Ginther
Ron Ginther
Mellina Jones
Clara Kaye
Richard Kirk
Frank Krasnowsky
Lee Mayfield
Darcy Oleson
Bob Patrick
Jo Patrick

Tim Patrick
Gale P.
Al P.
John Severn
Larry Shumm
A. Stone
Sally Stone
Waymon Ware
Melba Windoffer
Jack Wright

Connecticut

David Dreiser*
Ellen Linden
Carl Linden
Seattle Non-SWP
YSAers who are con-
currently resigning
from YSA on the
basis of this state-
ment:
Miriam Rader
Larry Glickman
Don Glick

Though dated April 9, 1966, document was discussed and voted on at meeting of April 4, 1966.

*Drieser had resigned from the SWP in letter of March 17, 1966.
(See P.C. Minutes No. 7, March 31, 1966.)

Ed Shaw