

VANGUARD newsletter

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SWP EXPELS COMMUNIST TENDENCY

In June 1971, VANGUARD NEWSLETTER stated that "the opportunist policies of the SWP [Socialist Workers Party] and the U Sec [United Secretariat of the Fourth International]...is now causing a sharp crisis in their ranks".

A manifestation of the SWP's crisis is the speed with which it moved to expel its most consistent, persistent and principled opposition, the Communist Tendency (CT). This exhibition of crass bureaucratic high-handedness, barely six weeks after its national convention, is a measure of its increasingly rapid political degeneration.

The SWP bureaucratic axe, it would seem, was wielded with a greater regard for the organizational amenities in 1963-64 against the Revolutionary Tendency, led by James Robertson, which became the Spartacist League (SL), and then shortly thereafter, against the tendency led by Tim Wohlforth, which became the Workers League (WL).

Today, it would seem, the SWP's minorities receive much shorter shrift. The SWP leadership seems far less concerned over protests from its ranks now, even though it is presently two if not three times larger than it was in 1964. This lack of concern accurately reflects the present membership composition of the SWP, a membership largely recruited from the student radical milieu in activities of a "popular

front" type. The working class character of the SWP is long gone, along with the "old" Trotskyism.

A centrist organization in rightward motion, i.e., toward greater accommodation to bourgeois elements be it the trade union bureaucracy, certain petty-bourgeois layers, or, more directly, toward a section of the bourgeoisie itself, can only deal with a serious Marxist opposition in its own ranks by organizational measures. It is required to hide its revolutionary past--with which the opposition continually confronts it, and which threatens to become public--in achieving respectability in the eyes of these bourgeois layers. It attempts to suppress even the fact of the physical existence of a revolutionary tendency in its ranks to avoid frightening the bourgeois elements being wooed.

Every attempt is made, therefore, by the leadership of such a right-centrist organization to tighten the organizational screws, to interpret the party's rules and regulations in the strictest possible way against the minority, to distort them, to hurriedly introduce new rules and

regulations, and to blow up small "errors" into monstrous crimes against the party, as the basis for its expulsion. The leadership of the degenerating organization must avoid, at all costs, acknowledging the political positions of its revolutionary minority.

The political resolutions which the CT submitted to the convention indeed stamp it as a revolutionary Marxist tendency. Its counter-resolution to the majority's political resolution, "Historical Roots of the Degeneration of the Fourth International and of the Centrism of the SWP--For a Return to the Proletarian Road of Trotskyism", and its statement in the discussion bulletins, "The International Situation: An Initial Assessment", also make clear that the CT's politics and those of VANGUARD NEWSLETTER are in fundamental agreement.

The CT's major resolution characterizes the SWP as "right centrist reformism"--a judgement which is once again confirmed by the CT's expulsion. Its political seriousness is attested to by the careful historical analysis in which it demonstrates how and when the SWP made its qualitative leap to centrism. Concentrating on the period leading to the 1953 split in the Fourth International, it analyzes the origins of Pabloism and exposes the SWP's own complicity in its development, its inability to conduct a political struggle against Pabloism and its eventual capitulation to it.

Organizations such as the WL, the Socialist Labour League (SLL) in England with which it is in political solidarity, and the SL have published many an article attacking Pabloism and the SWP. The CT resolution, for the first time, presents a concrete history and analysis of the origins of Pabloism. This Marxist treatment of a social phenomenon, missing from the voluminous "dialectical" writings about Pabloism, is directed to answering the basic question, "How is it possible that --apparently overnight--a revisionist current such as Pabloism was

able to capture and maintain control over the majority of the Fourth International?" This analysis is of fundamental importance in illuminating the SWP's evolution.

The second part of the resolution concerns itself with analyzing the present politics of the SWP, beginning with a pointed criticism of Mandel's economic theories, which are used:

"to evade the necessity of turning to the working class, to allow opportunist deviations in the backward countries, to permit adaptationism to petty-bourgeois currents in the imperialist centers, and, generally, to thoroughly revise the historic traditions of Trotskyism."

We intend to publish in our next issue sections of the resolution containing the CT's critique of and basic program on "Womens Liberation" to begin with, to be followed by the sections on "Nationalism", which includes its position on the Negro question, "The Struggle Against Imperialist War" and on a "Proletarian Military Policy". As our readers will see, the programmatic positions of the CT comrades are entirely consistent with those of VANGUARD NEWSLETTER. Moreover, on some questions, they have made distinct political contributions of their own. In our opinion, the CT comrades have functioned in the SWP as genuine Bolsheviks, defending the best traditions of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky.

The last part of the CT resolution is an addendum which deals with the documents of the "Proletarian Orientation" (PO) tendency, another oppositional current in the SWP. This tendency was concerned to move the SWP from its present exclusive orientation toward petty-bourgeois movements back to its past proletarian orientation. However, it remained in essential agreement with the basic program of the majority.

The PO tendency was outflanked immediately after the convention by the SWP's purely verbal return to aspects of the "old" Trotskyism.

Reacting to Nixon's 90-day "price"-wage freeze, and to the noise of the labor bureaucracy designed to cover up its knee-bending to the ruling class, the SWP resurrected, for the moment, its previously discarded slogans on the need for activity among the rank-and-file and for a labor party based on the trade unions, while also continuing to function as before, where "the money is", within the petty-bourgeois radical milieu.

The CT describes the PO tendency in the following words:

"...the tendency as a whole, and especially its self-created leadership, shares the underlying assumptions which govern the policies of the party leadership... Just as the party's position can be characterized as right-centrist, slipping and sliding rapidly towards reformism...so can the politics of the 'Proletarian Orientation' tendency, which cannot or will not make a qualitative break with the revisionism dominant in our movement, be justly named left-centrist."

In his article which appeared in the "Bulletin" of August 23, 1971, Tim Wohlforth had the following to say about the SWP convention:

"It will be to the everlasting shame of the SWP, its members and all political tendencies existing within that party, that Hansen's international report received a unanimous vote at the conference. Particular blame must be shouldered by the opposition forces within the SWP who have yet to break with the methods which led to what they fight in the leadership's petty-bourgeois line."

Never does the dialectic impel Wohlforth to differentiate between the CT and the PO tendency in spite of the seemingly thorough acquaintance which he has with SWP internal bulletins and convention events. Wohlforth's statement that "Hansen's ...report received a unanimous vote at the convention is simply not

true! It is our understanding that the CT, which had one delegate at the convention voted against Hansen's report as well as against every other political position put forth by the SWP leadership. The CT's counter-resolution and international document--both of which Wohlforth must certainly have readily available--testify to these facts.

"The International Situation": An Initial Assessment", which criticizes the SWP's position on almost every international question, states the following:

"We hope to be able to present to the cadres of world Trotskyism a correct political alternative to the Tweedledum-Tweedledee choices now before them. We have no faith in either the 'orthodox' SWP or in the unregenerate leaders of the old guard 'Pabloites'".

And further:

"Many comrades, recognizing the insanity of Mandel's and Maitan's line on Latin America, where their official section is nothing more than a southern branch of the Weatherman, react by supporting the 'orthodoxy' of the SWP. It is hollow orthodoxy and a false perspective. The SWP has no 'proletarian orientation' for Latin America, just as it has none for the United States."

These lines seem to be deliberately aimed at the PO tendency for its expected vote in support of the SWP's international positions.

The final three sentences state:

"We will not support 'Kautsky' against 'Bernstein'. This blind alley is not the way out. The leadership's international policies must be rejected if we are to regain our program and our heritage in order to build the World Party."

How is it possible for Wohlforth to maintain, in the light of its overall political position and the above specific rejection of the SWP

"leadership's international policies", that the CT had "yet to break with the methods" of the SWP leadership and, moreover, had actually voted for Hansen's report? Faulty information; perhaps? But this hypothesis must be rejected in the overall context of the article. For Wohlforth not to be able to differentiate between the two different minority tendencies, he would have had to be unaware of the CT, its counter-resolution, its discussion articles and its delegate status at the convention as well as its vote against Hansen's report. But he is able to speak with confidence about the SWP's internal discussion and the proceedings of the convention!

We believe that an explanation for Wohlforth's conduct which fits the facts is that he found it politically less embarrassing to resort to the expediency of not acknowledging the political positions of the

BOLIVIA AND THE POR - Robert Davis

American Marxists were shocked by the tragic events in Bolivia. We know what this will mean for the comrades of the Partido Obrero Revolucionario (POR) and other workers.

They will be hunted down, tortured and slaughtered by the reaction. This has generally been the case wherever the workers and peasants have been defeated in a revolutionary situation. We would hope that reports to the effect that the POR's forces are largely intact, that the Bolivian revolution has not been decisively defeated, is a correct appraisal of the situation.

At this time, it is necessary to maintain a sober attitude in evaluating the role played by the POR under Guillermo Lora's leadership. Hysterical outbursts and charges of betraying the revolution, or, the opposite pole, a blanket defense, can only add to the confusion and do additional harm to the revolutionary movement.

A key question which has not been satisfactorily answered in the tirades by Tim Wohlforth and the Workers League (WL) against the POR is, did the English, French and American sections of the Interna-

CT. In much the same way, his "Bulletin" has avoided dealing with the positions of VANGUARD NEWSLETTER.

With this "method", Wohlforth functions in the same organizational fashion as the SWP leadership. It too probably tried to ignore the CT, only later to resort to the expediency of the organizational axe. If past practice is any guide, Wohlforth and the editors of the "Bulletin" will not correct this "error". They will shun and even slander the CT comrades because, in their struggle against revisionism, they have arrived at politics congruent with those of VANGUARD NEWSLETTER and not of the WL. The "everlasting shame" belongs to the WL.

VANGUARD NEWSLETTER is making available photocopies of the CT documents at the nominal price of \$1.50. Our readers are advised to request them early as we have only a limited supply.

tional Committee (IC) of the Fourth International attempt to influence Lora in a consistent revolutionary direction? Before the August events, only copious praise for the Bolivian party; after the defeat, savage attacks. The answer which is presently hidden in the internal relations of the IC's sections can only come from this source. It is clear, however, that although the WL's criticisms of the role of the POR are valid, the Socialist Labour League (SLL) in England, which reprinted its criticisms and the WL as well cannot dodge their share of the responsibility for the defeat. Their indecent haste in disassociating themselves from Lora and the POR at this late date has the appearance of rats deserting a sinking ship.

The reports in the press, including Wohlforth's "Bulletin" do not provide sufficient information for a detailed analysis of the Bolivian events. But certain questions can be raised in the light of the known

facts. No Marxist will deny that the Popular Assembly represented a situation of "dual power", with the Torres regime balancing in Bonapartist fashion between elements of the bourgeoisie, on the one hand, and the workers and peasants, on the other. Did the POR call for such transitional measures as the democratization of the army by the election of officers and the formation of soldiers' committees? It would appear that this demand was not raised. And yet, one of the most fundamental tasks in a revolutionary situation is to win the rank-and-file soldier to the workers' cause.

Was the need to arm the workers and replace the army with a workers' militia raised as a fundamentally necessary measure for a proletarian revolution? We know that the POR called for arms, but only, it seems against the threat of an attack from the right-wing of the military.

We also have no information as to whether the POR raised the demand for the nationalization of industry under workers' control. The cry to expropriate the properties of counterrevolutionaries was only raised, it seems, when the military overturn was taking place.

Were the demands of the peasants taken into account and raised in a manner which would win them to a proletarian revolution? Again, this information is unavailable.

The Popular Assembly was a Soviet structure in embryonic form, but with an important difference. The Russian Soviets of workers were separate from those of peasants. Only in the regional and "All-Russian" congresses did the representatives of these different social classes sit together. The Popular Assembly was never differentiated in this manner. Instead of the more advanced workers winning hegemony first in the working class and then over the peasantry, the more backward peasantry was able to bloc with the more backward workers to retard the development of the movement as a whole. As we understand it, the POR was not only instrumental in creating the Popular Assembly, but also in naming it. But this class-

less designation by a Trotskyist party could only denote, in our opinion, a certain disorientation.

The question which must be asked of the POR's leadership is, did the party struggle within the Assembly to build the consciousness that it must take the power, and that no confidence was to be placed in the Torres regime, the Bolivian Kerensky? Did the POR, in other words, make clear that only a proletarian dictatorship could speak and act in the interests of the workers and peasants? There is, unfortunately, no indication that it functioned in this way. On the contrary, it appeared that the POR itself had illusions about the Torres regime.

We do not consider it permissible, however, to lump the POR with the Stalinists and Pabloists, as does Tim Wohlforth, in his denunciation in the August 30, 1971 "Bulletin". We believe that the Bolivian comrades made serious errors which cannot be hidden and should not be papered over. It is only by learning from their mistakes that the comrades of the POR can overcome them in time, can yet lead the Bolivian working class, supported by the peasantry, to power. It is by learning from the POR's errors that the revolutionists in Latin America and other under-developed countries can avoid repeating them.

The roots of the POR's mistakes in August are to be found in its policies in the Bolivian revolution of 1952. It then, in essence, gave support to the MNR regime under Paz Estenssoro and called for the admission of the workers' organizations into that government. Lora and the POR did learn from this mistake, but only in part. The POR did maintain its independence from the Torres regime and did attempt to lead the Bolivian masses toward the "dictatorship of the proletariat".

But, its illusions in that regime seem to have been similar in nature to those held by the Bolshevik leadership in Russia before Lenin's return in April 1917. As Lora himself testified after the defeat, these illusions served to immobilize

the POR and facilitate the course of the counterrevolution. In an article printed in the "Bulletin" of September 27, 1971, Lora stated:

"At this time everybody thought-- including we Marxists--that the arms would be given by the governing military team...This position was completely wrong. It did not take into account that Torres preferred to capitulate to his fellow generals before arming masses who showed signs of taking the road to socialism and whose mobilization put in serious danger the army as an institution."

Lora is an honest revolutionist, and readily admits to a serious error. In this respect, he towers over his belated critics. However, he does not examine the reasons for the POR's illusions in Torres.

An important factor in the mistakes of the POR would seem to be the disorientation introduced at the time of the Cuban revolution by the capitulation of the "orthodox" Trotskyists of the SWP and in Latin America to Pabloism.

In Cuba, a petty-bourgeois stratum headed by Castro and conducting a guerrilla struggle from a peasant base came to power on a program of bourgeois-democratic reforms and industrialization.

In pursuit of these goals, Castro came increasingly into conflict with American imperialism and its Cuban compradores, and was forced to take a leftward course. The existence of the Soviet Union made it possible for Castro to maneuver with the masses against imperialism. In the course of this struggle, the Cuban Bonapartist regime, resting on capitalist property relations, nationalized the means of production and instituted the foundations of a planned economy along with a monopoly of foreign trade. Under the threat of American military intervention, Castro was, for a time, required to arm the masses. The Cuban bourgeoisie was destroyed as a social and economic force. However, workers' councils, in which the proletariat could exercise its

class rule were non-existent. Trade unions were transformed into appendages of the state. A deformed workers' state was thus created, not qualitatively differing from the degenerated workers' state in the Soviet Union and the deformed workers' states in Eastern Europe and China.

Under the particular historical conditions of the post-war period, petty-bourgeois formations in underdeveloped countries have been able to maneuver between American imperialism and the Soviet Union. With the onset of a world capitalist crisis and the sharpening struggles of the working class everywhere, the possibilities of continuing the Bonapartist balancing acts on capitalist or collective property will end.

The POR joined the Pabloists at the time of the split in the Fourth International in 1953. It subsequently broke with them, only to rejoin them in 1963. In 1969, Lora broke with Moscoso and his guerrilla warfare perspective in order to maintain a working class outlook. The POR subsequently joined the IC after reaching agreement with its perspectives. It would seem, however, that some of the erroneous conceptions which it had assimilated from the Pabloists about the Cuban revolution had not been entirely eradicated, e.g., the new "appreciation" of the role of the peasantry and of the possibility of a leftward shift by Bonapartists a la Castro.

Sossa, a POR leader was quoted in our last issue as stating that the "counterrevolutionary" Bolivian Communist Party, which closely followed "the line of the POR...will attempt to turn the Assembly into a bourgeois institution". But, could such a party have followed the POR's line if that line had been the irreconcilable line of Lenin, and not the more conciliatory line which it followed toward the Torres regime?

A defeat for the socialist revolution has occurred in Bolivia, even if it has not been decisive. An opportunity has been lost. If the POR had succeeded in leading the Bolivian workers and peasants to

power, the revolution would have spread to other countries in Latin America, further undermining the strength of American imperialism. It would also not have been confined to the under-developed countries or to one continent. It would have had an impact in the US, where the relative class peace of over 20 years is being shattered. The economic concessions which the bourgeoisie gave the American workers in the past was based in part on the super-profits extracted from Bolivia and other areas of the world. Given the contradictions in Bolivia,

the proletarian revolution is still on the order of the day.

The POR, and not it alone, must learn the bitter lesson from the past mistakes. The Bolivian defeat is proof in the negative that the reconstruction of the Fourth International is one of the most vital questions of the day. The Bolivian defeat might not have occurred if the IC had been a real international with a democratic-centralist structure, instead of a loose federation of national parties, each focusing on its own national arenas.

WE DECLINE AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE INVITATION

∟The following letter gives our reasons for refusing to take part in the second conference arranged by Lutte Ouvriere of France and International Socialism of Great Britain.

∟In our first issue in 1969, we reprinted the following statement from our pamphlet, Spartacist League Split:

"The post-World War upsurge of world capitalism and the development of deformed workers' states, produced incredible theoretical confusion and shattered the world movement of Trotskyism. The sharpening of the contradictions of capitalism in the United States and on a world scale, the beginning of the economic downturn, heralds the beginning of greater clarity. The ebb in the revolutionary socialist movement, as seen by its fractionation into small circles, will, in the coming period, be reversed, as objective circumstances make clear the programmatic basis for its reconstruction. And this demands discussion, debate and a principled unity in action by those who see themselves as revolutionary socialists.

∟We then continued:

"Our approaches have nothing in common with 're-groupment', the unity of the swamp, the unity of diverse groups on the least principled common denominator, and adhering to the cardinal rule, "No

criticism! Live and let live." No! Ours will be a unity achieved through struggle for a principled program. "Discussion, debate and a principled unity in action", are all aspects of this struggle, and will be the hallmark of our newsletter."

∟It is through the tactic of the "united front", which Lenin and Trotsky developed at the Third Congress of the Communist International that "discussion, debate and a principled unity in action" can occur between different socialist groups without promoting illusions in opportunists. The entire purpose of the united front of working class organizations on a specific set of transitional demands, is to unite the class under revolutionary leadership. Should the opportunist leaderships refuse to form such a front on the basis of demands which their own members see as correct, they forfeit their confidence. Should they accede, their members will have the possibility of judging these leaders in action, and of being won to the program of the revolutionists. It is entirely possible that some of these leaders and even a left-wing of a centrist organization can be won in this way to revolutionary politics.

∟We believe with Lenin and the Bolsheviks that it is impermissible to haggle over principles. We fight for programmatic agreement with

other revolutionists as the basis for a common organization, nationally and internationally. It was this insistence on principle and program which distinguished Lenin and his party in the struggle against "economism" and Menshevism, in opposing the August bloc of 1912, and also in erecting the "21 point" hurdle to bar opportunists from the Communist International.

Lenin earlier, and Trotsky from 1917 on, clearly understood the indispensable role of revolutionary leadership in achieving a victorious socialist revolution. To blur the distinction between the Marxist

revolutionists and the opportunists, to build a half-way house on the "least principled common denominator", guarantees, at the revolutionary moment, that the working class will be left without revolutionary leadership. Should the separation between opportunists and revolutionists come too late, it will mean a working class confused, divided and, therefore, impotent at that moment.

This is the lesson of the defeat of the German and Hungarian revolutions in 1918 and 1919, and also, it would seem, of the more recent defeat of the Bolivian revolution, discussed elsewhere in this issue.

Lutte Ouvriere
Dear Comrades,

October 4, 1971

VANGUARD NEWSLETTER wishes to thank you for your invitation to the second international conference which Lutte Ouvriere (LO) of France, International Socialism of Great Britain (ISGB) and the International Socialists of the United States (ISUS) are organizing in Western Europe in October 1971.

In concurrence with our fraternal organization, the Labor Action Committee of Canada, we find it necessary to decline and wish to make our reasons for so doing clear.

Your leaflet indicates that these conferences are seen as part of "a series of international meetings" concerned to "develop links between revolutionary socialists in different countries". The International Bulletin of Revolutionary Socialism, which summarizes the positions of the participants at the first conference in England, considers these conferences as contributory to "the eventual formation of an international revolutionary workers' party worthy of the name".

VANGUARD NEWSLETTER had occasion, in its May 1971 issue, to quote the following from Trotsky's pamphlet, In the Middle of the Road:

"The international is first of all a program, and a system of strategic, tactical and organizational methods that flow from it."
(Trotsky's emphasis)

Neither the leaflet nor the Inter-

national Bulletin, however, present a programmatic basis for these conferences. And indeed, the participants at the first conference have a number of serious, and, it would seem, irreconcilable political disagreements.

Thus, LO considers the Soviet Union to be a degenerated workers' state, and Eastern Europe and China as capitalist states. In the event of a war in which China "would line up with the US against the USSR", it would support the USSR.

IS(GB), joined by the Maoist Avanguardice Operaia of Italy, considers the Soviet Union to be state capitalist. In a war between China and the Soviet Union, it would support China, which it also views as state capitalist, but not imperialist.

The IS(US) delegate considers the Soviet Union, China and Eastern Europe to be bureaucratic collectivist.

The delegate from the Labor Committee (LC) in the US sees this question as "abstract" and "questioned the usefulness of this debate", but felt that the "Eastern bloc" could be reasonably defined as "degenerated workers' states".

LO informs us that it "bases its activity on the Transitional Programme on which the Fourth International was founded".

IS(GB), however, sees the Transitional Program as "not entirely applicable in a period of capitalist expansion, albeit uneven and intermittent".

The IS(US) delegate categorically rejects "the Transitional Programme with its theory of the Death Agony of Capitalism".

While these differences are formidable, the major participants do have some positions in common. All representatives indicated a desire to root themselves in the working class. But, without a common program, they also found themselves in disagreement over "tactical and organizational methods".

LO believes in the "implantation of revolutionaries in the working class" and in "serious factory work even by groups of petit-bourgeois composition", and not by "being content to orient to students or marginal sectors, e.g., French teachers or technicians where the union bureaucracy is weaker".

IS(GB), however, sees its growth as having resulted from "involvement in mass youth movements", although it "always retained an orientation to the industrial struggle". It considers that "work among teachers or among Irish workers in Britain is not a diversion", and that "some student struggles link directly to the working class".

IS(US) has also "attempted to orient toward the working class and is aiming to send members into factories and to recruit workers". It is concerned to "link the anti-war movement to domestic struggles", to build "shop floor groups inside and outside the unions", and to "develop programmes which relate the most advanced section, such as the blacks, to the working class as a whole". The IS(US) delegate also indicated that "students can act as a catalyst for a working class which feels helpless".

The LC spokesman acknowledged that his organization has a "mainly student membership", but was not defen-

sive about its composition. He too indicated that the LC desires to be transformed into a "workers organization". However, it is concerned to win workers to a "class for itself programme" and thus "unite it with its historic allies". The LC, according to its spokesman, believes that "even anti-capitalist struggles at a purely local level lead to anarcho-syndicalism". It is our understanding that LC's "class for itself" strategy is indifferent and basically, opposed to a struggle within the trade unions on a transitional program against the labor bureaucracy and for an alternative revolutionary leadership. It asks the workers to eschew "parochialism" and enter the embryonic "Soviets" which it intends to construct together with students and oppressed minorities.

Participants at an international conference should at least begin with a common international perspective, a common understanding of the nature of the epoch. But this binding cement was non-existent and also accounted in large part, in our opinion, for the absence of a common "program...strategic, tactical and organizational methods".

LO was not concerned to present an analysis of the present period. It only indicated that it "largely shares" IS(GB)'s analysis of the arms economy, but felt that "emphasis on objective factors is insufficient and dangerous...Theory is important, but valueless without implantation in the working class".

IS(GB) considered that the "post-war stabilization of capitalism... is explained by the arms economy" and that "the coming period will see regional unevenness, inflation and unemployment", but within a continuing if "intermittent" world "capitalist expansion".

The LC delegate disagreed with IS(GB), and "argued that the US faces a more serious crisis...", but he also demonstrated little concern with the shape of world economy.

As the first issue of VANGUARD NEWSLETTER in June 1969 stated, we believe in "discussion, debate and

a principled unity in action". We, however, made our purpose quite clear. We strive to rebuild a Leninist and Trotskyist vanguard party in the US as a section of and as part of the process of building an international, on our program. As we then said,

"Our approaches have nothing in common with 're-groupment', the unity of the swamp, the unity of diverse groups on the least principled common denominator..."

In that issue, we also stressed the dialectical materialist method of Marxism as an indispensable tool for a "correct understanding of reality", and therefore, for "program...strategic, tactical and organizational methods".

In our opinion, all the conference participants are united by a common impressionism, by a tendency to elevate and isolate aspects of the whole, so typical of the method of empiricism, whatever their occasional obeisances to dialectics.

Basing ourselves, not merely on the appearance of "contemporary capitalism", but upon the entire post-war development of world capitalism, and within the framework of our understanding of the laws of motion of capitalism in the epoch of imperialism, an understanding grounded in the contributions of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, we concluded that a new world crisis was on the way.

In August 1969, in its "Perspectives and Program For the American Revolution", VANGUARD NEWSLETTER set forth its perspective in a number of theses. In condensed form, they are as follows:

"Despite Keynesian...manipulations ...the post-World War II expansion of capitalism had reached its end; ...monetary and balance of payments difficulties express the underlying and fundamental contradictions between the productive forces and the relations of production;...the steep ascent--prepared by...massive destruction... capital from the US...with an

unscathed and enlarged productive plant...Keynesian deficit financing, ...suspension of the law of value in international relations in behalf of American monopoly capital,...stabilizing effect on the market of the degenerated and deformed workers' states--guarantees that the decline will be catastrophic...; the capitalists in every country prepare for a sharpening international competition...for the shrinking world market by a war against their own working classes, ...the economic contradictions find expression in an unbalancing of the social equilibrium, as the workers fight against...their ruling classes..."

The Nixon Administration's "new economic policies"--the attack on the working class in the form of a so-called "price"-wage freeze, the production "incentives" to and the 10% "protective" tariff for American capitalism, which throws down the gauntlet to its rivals--indicate that our prognosis, on the whole, correctly understood the direction, if not entirely the tempo, of developments.

US "arms" have, no doubt, operated as a stimulant to its and world capitalist economy in a manner prescribed by Keynes. However, this secondary factor, upon which IS(GB) bases its prognosis of a continuing expansion, on the whole, of world capitalism, has in fact, now turned into its opposite. The deficit financing of armaments costs, past and present, unleashes an inflation which is also exported abroad and which, in turn, moves the working classes into struggle in defense of their living standards. Inflation causes American products--which have been steadily losing ground to the more rapidly advancing productivity of its rivals--to become even less competitive. The overvalued dollar functioning as an international monetary unit was increasingly under attack in financial crises which brought the world capitalist economy to the brink of disaster.

But, true to the methodology of empiricism, IS(GB) continues to

declare that the escalator stairs go "UP", although they are now reversed. Although its faith has been shaken, it still upholds the "arms economy" as a stabilizer and motor for a continuing capitalist expansion.

Impressionism, the common bond of all the participants, has enabled them to reach agreement in some areas.

Thus, LO and IS(GB) take a similar view of the "arms economy". All the participants, in our opinion, respond to the "third world" by active or passive opportunistic adaptation, by reacting to the surface appearance of the "new" reality and to the uneven manifestations of class struggles in the under-developed and advanced countries.

LO, under its formula of "supporting anti-imperialist struggles", and "in factory bulletins... stress/ing/ solidarity, but to the vanguard... be/ing/ more critical", has, in our opinion, accommodated to petty bourgeois nationalism and Stalinism in a manner qualitatively indistinguishable from the other participants. All sow, or refrain from dispelling for "tactical" reasons, illusions about the "Arab Revolution". All have refrained from exposing the Stalinist neo-Menshevik program of the North Vietnamese and the NLF for South Vietnam, its meaning for Indochina as a whole, and its relationship to the counterrevolutionary doctrine of "peaceful coexistence" of the Soviet and Chinese bureaucratic castes which preside over their "socialism in one country".

LO and IS(US) have made gross accommodations to Black nationalism in the US. LO, on the grounds of "modesty", on the basis that white workers must prove themselves to the Black, has even advocated a dual vanguard, separate Black and white "Leninist" parties, in complete opposition to the Leninist conception of one vanguard organization for a working class faced with one and the same ruling class. As VANGUARD NEWSLETTER has pointed out, IS(US) supported a movement to destroy a teachers' union in the name of Black "community control" in the

company of assorted Stalinist formations and also the Socialist Workers Party.

We believe that LO's departure from a Leninist conception of organization for the US is only a symptom of its breach with Leninist organizational methods in general.

Lenin and the Bolsheviks approached every political organization, not on the basis of its formal designation as "socialist" or even "revolutionary socialist", but in terms of the actual content of its politics, i.e., its program and the manner in which it carried it out. On this basis, they would determine its class nature, the class interests which it, in reality, represented. On this basis, Bolshevism recognized the petty-bourgeois nature of the Mensheviks and Social-Revolutionaries and grew strong in the struggle against opportunism and petty-bourgeois revolutionism. But, LO, on the basis of a narrow organizational and national rationale--of attracting French workers to a united "revolutionary" organization--enters into the first stages of a unity with petty-bourgeois revisionists who have abandoned a working class orientation in the name of Trotskyism. In so doing, in indicating its willingness to "accept entry to the United Secretariat of the Fourth International /U Sec/", LO ignores the most fundamental programmatic considerations to provide the Ligue Communiste and the U Sec with a "left" cover and "rehabilitation".

We also believe that LO's approach to the building of a working class Leninist and Trotskyist party in France suffers from a one-sided appreciation of the task, and, thereby, falls into something akin to an "economist" perspective in respect to "spontaneity". According to the International Bulletin, LO believes that "revolutionaries who develop their organization outside the working class cannot develop a Marxist programme". We will readily agree that a so-called "Leninist" and "Trotskyist" organization which does not seek to build a working class base has an incurable petty-bourgeois "malady" which its program will sooner or later reflect. We will also

agree that a program must deal with the concrete circumstances in national arenas which differ as a result of historical development, and that this necessary concreteness requires, not intellectuals standing outside, but worker-Bolsheviks and theoreticians who have overcome their petty-bourgeois qualities and have become an integral part of the working class and its struggles.

At the same time, those who "stand for a Bolshevik model of organization" will hardly disagree that Marxist theory, which developed out of bourgeois culture, particularly in philosophy, history and economics, must be "brought to the workers from without".

According to Lenin:

"...all worship of the spontaneity of the working class movement, all belittling of the role of 'the conscious element', of the role of Social-Democracy, means, quite independently of whether he who belittles that role desires it or not, a strengthening of the influence of bourgeois ideology upon the workers." (What Is To Be Done, Lenin's emphasis)

We believe that LO's "modesty", its refusal to pose itself as the revolutionary Marxist party, but only as one of its ingredients-- which has its attractive side as against posturers-- is only another way of downgrading the role of program. In "belittling the role of 'the conscious element'", its own, LO avoids the responsibility, we believe, to function as a "Bolshevik model".

LO's view that composition was the reason for the degeneration of the parties of the Fourth International is, we believe, a one-sided and over-simplified understanding of a complex relationship. In counterposing theory to composition, LO promotes a mystique of "workerism" which is at bottom "worship of... spontaneity".

Marxist organizations have always begun with a handful of intellectuals, as circles, which then strive to build a party of the working

class. In a period of reaction, the party may be whittled down to little more than its leading core, and be more or less cut off from the working class. It is the revolutionary "idea" in correspondence with material reality, which enables revolutionary organizations to survive an enforced isolation from its class. On the other hand, without the "idea", without a clear revolutionary program, an organization with the highest working class composition may accommodate to the backwardness of the working class, may become a rear-guard, dependent on spontaneity.

LO has attributed the failure of revolutionists in France to seriously challenge the control of the Communist Party (CP) over the working class to "sectarianism", to failure to build a "united organization" which "could have attracted thousands of workers". It has also indicated that, in contradistinction to other socialists, it gives priority to work in the CGT, the main trade union of French workers, which is under the domination of the CP. We can appreciate the difficulties, the qualities of determination and courage which are required for this task.

As a result of this priority, as we understand it, LO, of all organizations to the left of the CP, had the largest contingent in the factories in May 1968. And yet, we were not able to find any reference in the newspapers or periodicals of either the socialist or capitalist press to indicate that LO played a leading role in the revolutionary upsurge. Can it be that it was not "thanks to sectarianism", but to LO's excessive "modesty" that the "chance was missed"?

We are as determined as LO to become a "Bolshevik model" and to root ourselves in the working class. We believe that our strength lies, however, in the quality of our revolutionary "ideas", our "program... strategic, tactical and organizational methods", and that we will succeed on this foundation in building a section of an international Leninist and Trotskyist working

class vanguard party.

As Trotsky taught us, those who are incapable of defending the workers' present gains will never win new ones. We defend the gains of the working class everywhere. As our definition of the Soviet Union as a degenerated workers' state and China, Eastern Europe and Cuba as deformed workers' states indicates, we will know how to unconditionally defend the existing collective property relations in every conceivable eventuality from imperialism and from the Stalinist parasitic castes whose maneuvers prepare the destruction of these relations.

As our document on "Perspectives and Program" indicates, we fight in our national arena to unite the Black and white workers in a struggle against all manifestations of special oppression within the context of a struggle for the interests of all workers, as an application of the Leninist position on the national question. We struggle within the trade unions on a transitional program concretely geared to our own historical development to create a transitional organization, a network of rank-and-file caucuses, which can provide an alternative leadership to the "labor lieutenants of the bourgeoisie" in ongoing struggles, and which can, in time, become the factory committees and councils or "Soviets", become, in other words, organs of "dual power" and working class rule.

In so doing, we fight against white chauvinism and Black nationalism. The more advanced Black work-

ers together with white workers can thus be won to our banner. Through a united front of struggle with Black caucuses, we will win their supporters, and some of their leaders as well, to our program and away from the petty-bourgeois reactionary utopia of Black nationalism. In this struggle, we unite workers, men and women, Black and white, and with them, the students and other intermediate layers who are capable of playing a positive role. We thereby build a vanguard party capable of leading the working class in a socialist revolution and to an end to every kind of oppression.

Your international conferences, in our opinion, bear a striking resemblance to the August bloc of 1912. It will be recalled that Trotsky self-critically analyzed this bloc in In Defense of Marxism, in polemics with the Shachtman-Abern-Burnham tendency of the SWP.

Trotsky was motivated by a desire to unite all tendencies in the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party for the socialist revolution, but had yet to learn that a party of the Leninist type, differentiated from the opportunists and petty-bourgeois revolutionists was an absolute necessity for its success. Lenin and the Bolshevik party refused to participate, and attacked the gathering for the absence of a common program.

It is because we refuse to be a party to a gathering of a similar character that we must decline your invitation.

Fraternally,

WE GREET THE AJS OF FRANCE

Bureau National de l' AJS
Dear Comrades,

October 20, 1971

VANGUARD NEWSLETTER of the United States sends comradely greetings to the second congress of the Alliance des Jeunes pour le Socialisme (AJS), the French youth organization associated with the Organisation Communiste Internationaliste, with best wishes for the success of its preliminary mass assemblage of youth.

The radicalization of student youth throughout the world was among the earliest symptoms of the growing

social instability marking the onset of a new world-wide crisis of capitalism. Today, the rapidly maturing

crisis, which is indissolubly linked to the crisis of world Stalinism, sweeps increasing numbers of working class youth into the revolutionary struggle.

Balance of payments and trade difficulties, inflation and monetary crises presently afflicting the United States are manifestations of the increasingly intolerable burden of its role as imperialist gendarme in Indochina and on a world scale in conditions in which the underdeveloped countries are increasingly threatening its "interests". They also reflect the changes which have taken place in the relationship of forces within world capitalism, of the rise of formidable rivals whose increased productivity has enabled them to penetrate American capitalism's domestic market and has ended its hegemony in the world market. More fundamentally, these difficulties reflect the sharpening conflict of the enormously increased productive forces against the confines of capitalist relations of production and the national state.

The capitalists of all countries are propelled into sharper struggle against their workers. As the Nixon "new economic policies" demonstrate, it is by increasing the rate of exploitation that they hope to defeat their rivals in the struggle for the world market, a struggle which, without the intervention of a proletarian revolution in the advanced countries, can only end as in the past in an infinitely more destructive world war. The first to bear the brunt of wars in defense of their "own" capitalism are the youth.

The May-June 1968 general strike in France was an earlier expression of the maturing crisis of world capitalism. By this action, which paralyzed the French bourgeoisie and its state, the French proletariat demonstrated not only its revolutionary capacities but also those of the workers in the advanced countries. It gave a crushing rejoinder to the petty-bourgeois revolutionists of all varieties, including the Pabloist revisionists of Marxism, all the heralds of "youth as a class" and the "third world" as the

essential revolutionary forces, who had written off the working class, especially in the advanced countries, as bribed, conservatized and incapable of overthrowing capitalism.

The chain of world capitalism will again break at its weakest link. As Lenin taught, it will occur in conditions in which the exploiters are unable to rule in the old way, and the masses are no longer willing to endure the old way. It is at this moment that a tested and resolute section of the international vanguard party of the working class, a Leninist and Trotskyist party, will be able to lead the masses in a victorious socialist revolution. We revolutionary Marxists in the United States understand our responsibility to the American and international working class, to the youth in the United States, France and throughout the world, to build such a section of such a party, to help reconstruct the world party of Trotsky, the Fourth International.

Engels, in his introduction to the third German edition of The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte made the point that:

"France is the country where more than anywhere else, the historical class struggles were each time fought out to a finish..."

It is entirely possible that the crisis of world capitalism will enable the French proletariat led by its vanguard party, and with it, the youth of France, to live up to this glorious heritage, and to achieve a socialist break-through for the international proletariat. A victorious revolution in an advanced country such as France will not be contained as was the Russian revolution, but will leap over all national frontiers to end capitalist, imperialist and all oppression everywhere and forever.

We wish you every success in your congress and in politically arming the youth of France for the socialist revolution.

With communist greetings,