

TROTSKYISM VERSUS  
REVISIONISM

A DOCUMENTARY HISTORY

VOLUME SEVEN

*The Fourth International  
and the  
Renegade Wohlforth*

LABOR PUBLICATIONS

**THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL  
AND THE RENEGADE WOHLFORTH**



***The Fourth  
International  
and the  
Renegade  
Wohlforth***

***The Struggle for Trotskyism  
in the United States***

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## FOREWORD

# Ten Years Since the Split with Wohlforth

The documents in this volume comprise the record of a fundamental and crucial chapter in the history of the struggle for Trotskyism in the United States — the fight against the renegade, Tim Wohlforth. At issue in this struggle, waged by the Workers League in solidarity with the International Committee of the Fourth International, was the defense of the revolutionary party of the working class — its traditions, history, principles, organizational security, and, at the most essential level of theory, the dialectical materialist method that is the foundation of cadre-training.

The publication of this volume is testimony to the fact that the lessons of the struggle against Wohlforth, despite the passage of ten years, have lost none of their political urgency. On the contrary, it is now more clear than ever that the issues raised by Wohlforth's desertion from the Workers League in September 1974 were profoundly related to the development of a new stage in the world capitalist crisis and the most fundamental political, theoretical and historical questions confronting the Trotskyist movement on a world scale.

This is proven by the historical fact that the immediate events which directly precipitated the split with Wohlforth led inexorably to the monumental political struggle of *Security and the Fourth International*, which culminated in the decisive exposure of imperialist agents operating in the top leadership of

the Socialist Workers Party. The extraordinary intervention of the late Joseph Hansen, long-time SWP leader, in defense of Wohlforth's flagrant violation of the Workers League's security — his failure to report the family connections of his personal companion, Nancy Fields, to leading CIA personnel — raised under new historical conditions all the unresolved questions surrounding the assassination of Leon Trotsky in August 1940.

In the course of this intervention initiated in May 1975 into the circumstances of Trotsky's death — *Security and the Fourth International* — it became clear that there had been nothing accidental about Hansen's defense of Wohlforth. Documents obtained by the International Committee uncovered the fact that Hansen, who had worked as one of Trotsky's secretaries in Coyoacan, Mexico between 1937 and 1940, entered into a secret and confidential relationship with the US State Department and FBI little more than a week after Trotsky's death. The subsequent development of this investigation would ultimately establish the connection between Hansen's recruitment as an agent and the Government's ultimate takeover of the SWP.

The unmasking of Hansen and his proteges in the present SWP leadership was an immense historical achievement by the International Committee. But it was prepared and arose out of the protracted struggle for Marxist theory with which this volume is essentially concerned. There is no greater challenge to the development of Marxist theory than the dialectical materialist training of revolutionary cadre in the center of world imperialism, the United States. At the heart of this training is the struggle against pragmatism, the national ideology of the American bourgeoisie.

It was Trotsky who first brought this to the attention of his followers in the United States. His first words to the American Trotskyists who greeted him as he got off the boat in Tampico in January 1937 were on the need to "inoculate" the youth against the disease of empiricism and pragmatism. Three years later, as the newly-formed Socialist Workers Party was torn by a bitter internal factional struggle, Trotsky passed from the

concrete organizational and political questions to the fundamental theoretical issues at stake in the fight against the petty-bourgeois opposition led by James Burnham, Max Shachtman and Martin Abern. Trotsky wrote to James P. Cannon, leader of the SWP: "Not all comrades possibly are content with the fact that I give the predominant place in the discussion to the matter of dialectics. But I am sure it is now the only way to begin the theoretical education of the Party, especially of the youth and to inject an aversion to empiricism and eclectics." (*In Defense of Marxism*, New Park Publications, p.120)

In his polemic against James Burnham, Trotsky noted the examples of American radicals who "began with a philosophical struggle against the dialectic but finished with a political struggle against the social revolution" (p.60) and pointed out that "Anyone acquainted with the history of the struggles of tendencies within the workers' parties knows that desertions to the camp of opportunism and even to the camp of bourgeois reaction began not infrequently with rejection of the dialectic." (*Ibid.*, p.94)

Trotsky's warnings were of an almost prophetic character. The ink on Burnham's documents attacking dialectical materialism was barely dry before he deserted not only the Socialist Workers Party but the working class movement itself. From there he passed immediately into the camp of imperialist reaction, became a neo-fascist ideologue and advocate of nuclear war against the Soviet Union, and in 1982 was awarded the "Medal of Freedom" by an ardent admirer, Ronald Reagan.

As for Max Shachtman, his evolution proceeded somewhat more slowly but still in the same anti-communist direction. From a position of indifference toward the dialectic, claiming there existed no fundamental relationship between "abstract" questions of theory and "concrete" political questions, Shachtman evolved after 1940 into the political godfather of all sorts of reactionary "new class" and state capitalist tendencies which reject the defense of the Soviet Union against imperialist attack. From the man who had played a decisive role in the founding of the Trotskyist movement and the building of the Fourth

International, Shachtman became, by the time he died in late 1972, a supporter of the imperialist war against Vietnam.

Trotsky's warning to Shachtman — "The dialectic of the historic process has more than once cruelly punished those who tried to jeer at it" — was vindicated in the starkest political terms. (*Ibid.*, p. 129)

While Trotsky's criticism was directed principally against Burnham and Shachtman, he was well aware of the fact that pragmatism was not simply the problem of the minority faction. Without his intervention, the SWP majority led by Cannon could not have prevailed. In the course of this struggle, Trotsky confessed to feeling "somewhat abashed over the fact that it is almost necessary to justify coming out in defense of Marxism within one of the sections of the Fourth International!" (*Ibid.*, p. 143)

Nor was Trotsky addressing solely the supporters of the minority when he explained: "In no other country has there been such rejection of the class struggle as in the land of 'unlimited opportunity.' The denial of social contradictions as the moving force of development led to the denial of the dialectic as the logic of contradictions in the domain of theoretical thought. Just as in the sphere of politics it was thought possible everybody could be convinced of the correctness of a 'just' program by means of clever syllogisms and society could be reconstituted through 'rational' measures, so in the sphere of theory it was accepted as proved that Aristotelian logic, lowered to the level of 'common sense,' was sufficient for the solution of all questions." (*Ibid.*, p. 57)

There can be no question that with the decisive political defeat of Burnham and Shachtman, Trotsky intended to open up a great new chapter in the theoretical training of the SWP and all the sections of the Fourth International. But this was prevented by his assassination, and it was therefore left to the SWP leadership to assimilate and build upon the lessons of the struggle waged by Trotsky for the dialectical materialist method.

However, the SWP leadership, though it had loyally defen-

ded the principles of the Fourth International in the battle against Burnham and Shachtman, failed in this task. It pragmatically fastened upon the one side of the struggle against the petty-bourgeois opposition most immediately useful for the practical activity of the SWP — Trotsky's insistence upon a serious turn by the entire Party to the working class and its newly-formed trade unions — but ignored the necessary theoretical content of such a "proletarian orientation." Cannon overlooked Trotsky's salutary advice: "It is precisely the party's penetration into the trade unions and into the workers' milieu in general that demands heightening the theoretical qualifications of our cadres. I do not mean by cadres the 'apparatus' but the party as a whole." (*Ibid.*, 128-29).

The life-and-death implications of these words were not understood by the SWP, and for this it paid a terrible political price. The vast upheavals of the Second World War and its aftermath gave rise to political and social contradictions of unprecedented explosiveness and complexity. The wealth of new forms of revolutionary struggle on a world scale, the twin-paradox of the post-war boom and the crisis of Stalinism, and, above all, the development of the class struggle as reflected within the working class and the revolutionary party as a unity of opposites, could not be comprehended except through a conscious struggle for the development of the dialectical method in the actual day-to-day practice of the Party leadership. Lest this "conscious struggle" be erroneously interpreted as some sort of leisurely academic exercise — as is claimed by the anti-Marxist impostor George Novack, the accomplice of Hansen — it must be stressed that the theoretical work of Marxists develops inseparably from an unrelenting conflict within the Party itself against all manifestations of bourgeois ideology in every sphere of political work.

The failure to conduct this struggle found its expression in the unpreparedness of the Socialist Workers Party for the political struggle which exploded within the Fourth International in 1953. Pabloite revisionism challenged every fundamental concept upon which Trotsky had based the founding

of the Fourth International, from the nature of the imperialist epoch and the revolutionary role of the working class to the categorical designation of the Stalinist bureaucracy as the main counterrevolutionary force within the international workers' movement. The aim of Pablo and his supporters was to politically liquidate the Fourth International as an independent revolutionary force and subordinate it to the political agencies of imperialism. Methodologically, they proceeded from an utterly metaphysical and impressionistic evaluation of the post-war boom and the development of the class struggle. Pabloism thus reflected the response of petty-bourgeois elements to the pressures of imperialism upon the Trotskyist movement. While Cannon turned a blind eye to the development of revisionism in Europe and attempted to hold his cadre together through various pragmatic combinations and agreements, Pablo was nonetheless building his own faction within the SWP. He gathered together the politically-demoralized elements among the middle class and privileged sections of trade unionists who were disoriented by the boom and the reactionary McCarthyite environment, which, to despairing impressionists, signalled the end of any revolutionary prospects within the United States.

Finally, the direct challenge mounted by Pablo's followers to the very existence of the SWP compelled Cannon to act in defense of the Fourth International as a whole. Marshalling all the political capital accumulated over a quarter-century of struggle as a Trotskyist, Cannon, working closely with the leader of the British section, Comrade Gerry Healy, issued the Open Letter which called for the expulsion of the Pabloites and for the formation of the International Committee to wage an all-out fight against revisionism.

The split again posed before the SWP the necessity of deepening the struggle against this new form of revisionism along the lines demanded by Trotsky in 1940. However, there was even less of an attempt in this direction in the aftermath of the Pablo fight than there had been in the period immediately following the split with the petty-bourgeois opposition of Burnham and Shachtman. Proposals made by the British Trot-

skyists for continuing international discussions to clarify the theoretical issues underlying the split were opposed by the SWP leaders. Instead, as soon as the immediate danger posed by the open supporters of Pablo had receded, the SWP slid back into its old political routine of pragmatic relations within the Party conditioned by the boom and the relative conservatism which predominated within the American labor movement. It avoided the painful fact that the material conditions which had given rise to Pabloism were still very much present and that those who had supported Cannon in 1953 were by no means immunized against the political infection. The result was that behind the increasingly hollow affirmations of Trotskyist orthodoxy the most virulent revisionism was, in fact, taking hold within the SWP. This crisis situation was intensified by the presence of an agent in the top leadership of the party, Joseph Hansen, who skillfully exploited to the advantage of imperialism all the weaknesses of the aging generation of leaders represented by Cannon, Ray Dunne and Arne Swabeck.

Despite the crisis which erupted in the world Stalinist movement in 1956, the SWP was unable to make any real headway among the tens of thousands of Communist Party members who broke with the party following the exposure of Stalin's crimes and the Soviet invasion of Hungary. The failure to mount a sustained offensive against Stalinism — as was done successfully by the British Trotskyists — was directly related to the SWP's decision, arrived at behind the back of the International Committee, to seek reunification with the Pabloites. This development, in early 1957, coincided with the initiation of the SWP's "regroupment" campaign, in which the party oriented itself increasingly toward political accommodation with the middle-class radical tendencies which proliferated in the wake of the shattering break-up of the Communist Party.

It was during this period of growing political crisis that Tim Wohlforth joined the Socialist Workers Party. An ex-student from Oberlin College, he began political activity in the Shachtmanite movement. However, he developed differences with

Shachtman over the latter's decision to abandon the few lingering strands of an independent political existence and liquidate into the Socialist Party, which was by then nothing more than a liaison committee between the AFL-CIO bureaucracy and the Democratic Party. Establishing contact with the SWP leadership, Wohlforth assumed responsibility for the development of a youth movement and became the national secretary of the Young Socialist Alliance.

In January 1961, in a letter to the national committee of the SWP, the British Trotskyists of the Socialist Labour League expressed their concern over the drift toward Pabloism within the American movement and called for a discussion to prepare for an international congress at which basic political and theoretical questions could be clarified. This proposal for an objective discussion clashed with the SWP's determination to consummate a reunification with the European Pabloites without any discussion, let alone clarification, of the issues which had produced the split in 1953. The issue of Cuba, which the SWP designated as a workers' state in 1960, was used by Hansen as a factional weapon to poison the political atmosphere within his organization with hostility toward the British Trotskyists and the International Committee.

Wohlforth, a member of the SWP Political Committee, declared his political support for the International Committee. He immediately came under ruthless political attack by Hansen, who conspired to purge him from the leadership of the YSA. Working closely with Hansen in this operation was Barry Sheppard, a relatively new recruit to the SWP who, just a few years earlier, had been an ardent right-wing Shachtmanite and opponent of Wohlforth's turn to Trotskyism. Wohlforth's replacements were drawn, as secretly prepared by Hansen in advance, from a group of students from Carleton College, who, as the Dean of Students admitted years later, "were plugged into" the SWP. Jack Barnes, who hailed from a right-wing Republican family in Dayton, Ohio, returned from a trip to Cuba financed by the Ford Foundation to join the mysterious Fair Play for Cuba Committee. From there he entered directly

into the Young Socialist Alliance and the Socialist Workers Party. (Barnes and his wife, Elizabeth Stone, were the first of 13 students who went directly from Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota into the top leadership of the YSA and SWP — where they have remained, virtually unchanged, for the last 20 years. It should be noted that at the time of their “recruitment,” neither the SWP nor the YSA had an active branch at Carleton. Moreover, with only a few exceptions, the Carleton recruits did not know each other personally and entered the SWP separately.) Within a few weeks, under the behind-the-scenes supervision of Hansen, Barnes was running a faction that would promptly oust Wohlforth from the YSA leadership, thus removing an obstacle to the SWP’s plans to split from the International Committee.

Despite these provocations — whose full significance would become clear only years later as a result of the *Security and the Fourth International* investigation — the International Committee fought for an objective discussion of the issues and constantly advised Wohlforth to avoid factionalism and subjectivism in his work as a spokesman for the minority International Committee tendency within the SWP. Repeatedly the British Trotskyists reminded Wohlforth that the struggle against revisionism within the SWP was of international, rather than simply American, significance. Therefore, it was vital that he overcome any tendency to approach the struggle in terms of what would be most advantageous for his immediate practical work within the SWP.

This was the first of many efforts made by the International Committee over the next 13 years to help Wohlforth overcome the pressure of the pragmatic outlook and method which predominates within the United States. The centrality of precisely this question was decisively established in the actual development of the struggle against the SWP’s betrayal of Trotskyism. Pressed on the question of method by the SLL, Hansen explicitly declared that dialectical materialism is simply empiricism “systematically carried out,” thus effacing the fundamental opposition between the two “warring camps” of

philosophy — materialism and idealism. Hansen's elevation of the subjective concept of "facts" into the supreme epistemological category expressed how far the SWP had gone in its rejection of the lessons of Trotsky's struggle against Burnham and Shachtman.

In June 1963 the SWP broke politically with the International Committee and joined with the Pabloites to form the United Secretariat. The fruits of this betrayal were realized within one year when the Ceylonese Pabloites — the allies of Joseph Hansen — became the first party calling itself Trotskyist to enter into a bourgeois coalition government. When Wohlforth and eight other supporters of the International Committee issued an open letter to the SWP membership on June 30, 1964, demanding a full discussion of this historically-unprecedented betrayal of the Ceylonese working class by the Pabloites, Hansen had them suspended and expelled.

The American Committee for the Fourth International (ACFI) was formed in the summer of 1964. During the next two years preparations were made for the establishment of an American section in political solidarity with the International Committee. This required further clarification of the nature of another tendency which had emerged out of the SWP, the Spartacist group led by James Robertson. The latter, like Wohlforth, had also entered the SWP via the Shachtmanite movement in the late 1950s and then became active in the YSA. However, what characterized Robertson's role while in opposition inside the SWP was his refusal to subordinate his narrow, US-oriented factional considerations to the interests of the Fourth International. He broke from the International Committee in 1962, insisting as a case-hardened pragmatist on his "right" to do whatever best suited his immediate factional aims inside the SWP, no matter how it cut across the struggle for political clarification in the world Trotskyist movement. This subjective method inevitably led Robertson to endorse the SWP's unprincipled reunification with the Pabloites. However, this political grovelling did not prevent his expulsion from the SWP on trumped-up charges in December 1963.

Despite these experiences with Robertson, the International Committee proceeded objectively and held discussions in 1965 with both the Spartacist and ACFI tendencies to see if conditions could be created for a principled unification of the two groups into a single organization. The results of this preparatory work were to be determined at the Third Congress of the International Committee in April 1966. However, Robertson's actions at the Congress made it absolutely clear that he had learned nothing from his previous errors. He ostentatiously violated the discipline of the Congress, challenged its political authority, and demonstrated that he would not accept the discipline of the international movement. Robertson was expelled from the Congress. The full responsibility for carrying forward the struggle for Trotskyism in the United States, in political solidarity with the International Committee, had to be met by the American Committee for the Fourth International. The struggle against Robertson was a decisive preparation for this task, for it established that the building of the Trotskyist movement in the United States could proceed only through an unyielding struggle against the reactionary petty-bourgeois milieu and pragmatic anti-internationalist outlook of American radicalism.

As we have seen, the founding of the Workers League in November 1966 arose out of the struggle against the betrayal of the Fourth International by the Socialist Workers Party. From the start the International Committee sought to impress upon Wohlforth that the Workers League could only develop if it fought consciously to break with the pragmatic method which had disarmed the SWP and led to its capitulation to American imperialism. In his greetings to the founding conference of the Workers League, Comrade G. Healy wrote:

*"If we appreciate the role of the working class then we will understand how important it is to wage a continuous struggle for dialectical materialism as against pragmatism and empirical idealist philosophy.*

*"It will be worse than useless to pay lip service to such a struggle and hope that your movement can muddle along without coming to*

*grips with the basic source of revisionism.*

*"We shall do everything in our power to help you with this struggle. But at your conference we urge you not to evade it. The historical education of the revolutionary party must proceed from an understanding that all its day to day difficulties have to be seen as a challenge to the development of Marxist theory. This theory cannot be extended except through the building of the revolutionary party. Every time you come across difficulties, accept that they are a challenge to the extension of Marxist theory. Once we understand this process, we shall really succeed in overcoming our difficult problems." (See pp. 209-210)*

The period in which the Workers League was founded was one of growing political and economic crisis of American imperialism. The devaluation of the British pound in the autumn of 1967 and the crisis on the Paris gold market in the spring of 1968 foreshadowed the eruption of the contradictions that had been building up within the capitalist system since the end of World War II. Both the 1965-68 uprising of black workers and youth in the urban ghettos and the massive movement of the French working class in May-June 1968 expressed the unstoppable approach of a new revolutionary flood-tide. Only the International Committee subjected these events to a scientific Marxist analysis and fought to prepare its cadre for their revolutionary implications. In the United States this required a struggle against all manifestations of pragmatic skepticism toward the insoluble nature of the imperialist crisis and the revolutionary role of the American working class. Providing continuous political assistance to the Workers League, the International Committee clarified basic questions of revolutionary perspectives in the United States. As a result of these struggles — on such issues as the role of the trade unions and the significance of the Labor Party demand, on the class nature of Black nationalism and the necessity to wage a sharp struggle against its petty-bourgeois ideology, on the treachery of the protest politics of the revisionist-led anti-war movement — the Workers League was able to register important initial gains.

Yet the activity of the Workers League during the first five years of its existence was of a largely propagandist character and only the most rudimentary steps had been taken toward the development of Party forces in the working class. However, Wohlforth tended to underestimate the complexity and protracted nature of this process, uncritically identifying the growth of membership and material resources, made possible by the radicalization of sections of the middle class youth under the impact of the Vietnamese Revolution, with the development of Marxism. The pragmatic outlook of the American middle class — conditioned historically by the virtually “automatic” character of the growth of US capitalism, based on techniques borrowed from Europe — found its manifestation in Wohlforth’s ever-more pronounced tendency to search for quick “successes” apart from a real struggle to prepare the necessary advances through patient theoretical work. This method characterized his attitude toward the International Committee. Impressed by the advances achieved by the Socialist Labour League — especially the founding of the first daily Trotskyist newspaper in September 1969 — Wohlforth thought that these could be copied and reproduced in the United States, without going through the difficult internal struggle to train a Marxist cadre.

The SLL repeatedly warned Wohlforth against this superficial approach. For example, in the spring of 1971 the *Bulletin*, at that time the weekly organ of the Workers League, announced that it would soon be published as a daily newspaper. Advising Wohlforth against proceeding with these plans, Comrade Healy explained, in a letter dated June 17, 1971:

*“The essence of pragmatism is to draw from the appearance of experience here and there in the movement and mechanically apply it to the USA. You think it is possible to look at the SLL and then go on and have a daily paper in the USA, that our long practical and theoretical preparation can be overlooked by some political whizz-kids. Let me say you haven’t yet begun to have a real fight inside your League.*

*“Alongside the crisis in the SWP you are going to have a ten-*

*dency toward more and more crisis in your own movement. We shall surmount this crisis by turning to the working class not just in theory but in practice. But that process is going to produce a few headaches I think you've overlooked."*(See pp. 217-218)

A week later, in a letter dated June 24, 1971, Healy expanded on this decisive question:

*"As we see it the dialectical essence of building a party is to continuously sharpen the internal conflict to the point of frustration as it were, then to take the essence of this experience through our practice into the workers' movement in the unions and negate it into the problems we encounter there.*

*"Only in this way do we gradually assimilate the essential knowledge for the 'leap' in the workers' movement and our own ranks."*(See pp. 219-220)

The dangers of pragmatic methods in the work of the Party were enormously magnified by the transformation in the world capitalist crisis that arose out of the collapse of the Bretton Woods system of dollar-gold convertibility and fixed exchange rates on August 15, 1971. This event signified a qualitative leap that would disrupt the old class relations based upon the boom in every imperialist country. This posed to Wohlforth, as the leader of the Workers League, the responsibility to develop the dialectical method in party work as the basis of cadre training and a real turn to the working class. As shown by the documents in this volume, which trace the political degeneration of Wohlforth and his transformation into an embittered enemy of the Workers League and International Committee, he recoiled from this responsibility. His attempt to combine formal adherence to the decisions of the International Committee with the maintenance of propagandist relations within the Workers League and personal abstention from the struggles of the working class proved to be untenable, as the circumstances which led to his resignation from the Workers League demonstrated so convincingly.

At this point it is not necessary to review these events as they are dealt with in great detail later in this volume. However, let us especially stress that it was by no means accidental that

Wohlforth's break with the movement occurred over the issue of security. The essence of pragmatism is subjective idealism, the philosophical position which asserts the primacy of consciousness over matter, denies the independent existence of the material world, and proceeds from the "self." Within the Marxist movement, the pragmatist may pay lip service to the existence of the material world; but in actual practice he identifies this material world with his own subjective sensations. His entire practice manifests this idealist inversion of the actual relations of consciousness to the external, primary, independently existing material world. Moving from the "self" to the Party, the subjective idealist liquidates into his own personal "needs" the objective, historically-determined interests of the working class. This idealist outlook becomes the basis for all sorts of subjective rationalizations for an essentially two-faced, duplicitous relationship with the revolutionary party. When Wohlforth was later asked why he had failed to inform the International Committee and the Workers League about the CIA family connections of Nancy Fields, his answer was a classic expression of the pragmatic outlook: "I didn't think it was important"! In other words, practice is not determined by the laws governing the objective movement of the class struggle, out of which the need for security arises, but by the subjective evaluation of the individual, acting on the basis of what he thinks is best for his immediate practical needs. Or, as Lenin once put it, "For the solipsist (and solipsism is the real standpoint of pragmatism) 'success' is everything needed by me in practice, which can be regarded separately from the theory of knowledge." (*Collected Works*, Vol. 14, p. 140)

After he deserted the Workers League, Wohlforth came out openly as an enemy of the materialist dialectic and revealed himself to be an out-and-out Kantian. In his first statement on his philosophical differences with the International Committee, Wohlforth singled out for attack Comrade Healy's lectures on cognition, arguing:

*"He sought to break down the moments of the dialectic in the most minute way, showing the opposites within each opposite at*

*each moment in the dialectical process. This kind of lecture has, in my opinion, very little use, because it abstracts out of an actual study of matter in motion a discussion of logic in such a manner as to encourage a very pedantic and formal approach."*

This counterposing of "an actual study of matter in motion" to "a discussion of logic" is a typical example of pragmatic demagogy; for what can such a study consist of apart from the dialectical logic which is, as Lenin explained, the laws "of the development of the entire concrete content of the world and of its cognition." (*Collected Works*, Vol. 38, p. 93)

Wohlforth's philosophical position exemplified the sterility of pragmatic epistemology, its contempt for abstract thought, the denial of the possibility of knowledge of matter beyond the sphere of immediate observation and its organic hostility to the scientific study of the self-movement of concepts and categories as the objective forms of the reflection in the minds of men of the law-governed movement of the universal. Significantly, in his subsequent elaboration of his philosophical views, Wohlforth explicitly rejected the existence of the universal — except as a purely mental, i.e., a priori, category through which particulars are subjectively connected "through a cognitive process."

These positions, analyzed at length in *What Makes Wohlforth Run?* and *The Fourth International and the Renegade Wohlforth*, were the theoretical core of the reformist perspective he openly advocated following his desertion. No less than in the case of Burnham and Shachtman, the political evolution of Wohlforth clearly established the profound connection between revisionism and the rejection of dialectical logic.

There certainly was nothing accidental about Hansen's intervention in defense of Wohlforth. Having successfully transformed the SWP into an organization totally riddled with government agents at every level, Hansen saw in the actions taken by the Workers League to defend its security an ominous development.

The devastating political consequences of Wohlforth's un-

bridled subjectivism are clearly documented in this volume. All the political principles for which Wohlforth had fought the previous decade were thrown overboard almost overnight. In his letter of resignation, Wohlforth credited himself with having led the struggle against "Hansen and Company." But within a few months, having refused to participate in the proceedings of a Commission of Inquiry for whose establishment he had himself voted, Wohlforth established direct contact with the Socialist Workers Party and shamelessly offered his services to Hansen in a grotesque slander campaign against the International Committee and Comrade Healy. In his letter to his old nemesis Barry Sheppard, written in January 1975, Wohlforth states that the positions advanced in his diatribe against the International Committee "are clearly mine, positions I have held publically and privately for a long time." (See page 287)

Here we have in Wohlforth's own words an admission of the totally unprincipled political methods of the American pragmatist. In the midst of his wild denunciations of the International Committee, Wohlforth casually admits to Sheppard that he held these views "privately for a long time." In other words, he concealed his political differences from the Workers League and the International Committee. This is a remarkable confirmation of the criticism made of Wohlforth in a letter written by Healy on August 10, 1973 — fully one year before Wohlforth's resignation.

"Formal acceptance of decisions only to ignore them in practice is the essence of separation of theory from practice," Healy wrote, adding: "What we will not tolerate is the kind of relation we had with the OCI, where they also used to accept the SLL only to knife every decision in the back as soon as they returned to France. Formal meetings became a cover behind which revisionism flourished." (See pp. 248-249)

Wohlforth's miserable subjectivism made him a useful tool in the hands of the police agents in the SWP leadership. As Wohlforth's own correspondence reveals, Jack Barnes did not care what he did on the SWP Political Committee as long as he collaborated in the organization of frame-ups and provocations

against the International Committee. One of Wohlforth's projects was to scour the earth looking for renegades like himself to denounce Comrade Healy. In December 1976 Wohlforth composed a memorandum in which he urged the SWP leaders to publish a compilation of all the political filth written by those who had deserted the International Committee. All the flotsam and jetsam of international revisionism, including the police agents among them, were to be asked to describe the traumas they had suffered. What they stood for politically was of no importance. The sole common denominator was to be simply subjective hatred of Healy. As Wohlforth wrote:

*"Of course we would not take political responsibility for the views of those breaking from Healy nor in any way suggest they take political responsibility for us . . . We just believe these views should be available in a coherent form to the working class public and would clearly state our own views as to what it all means in a separate introduction."* (See page 294)

Spitting on his own past, Wohlforth appeared in January 1977 on the "Platform of Shame" in London, alongside George Novack and Pabloite leader Ernest Mandel, to defend the agents inside the Trotskyist movement, slander Comrade Healy and attack the *Security and the Fourth International* investigation in the most vitriolic language. At public meetings, he endorsed Hansen's defense of Sylvia Caldwell (Franklin), the former personal secretary of SWP founder James P. Cannon, despite overwhelming evidence that she was an GPU agent who had played a major role in preparing the assassination of Trotsky. (See page 308) And yet, with characteristic contempt for truth, he was secretly advising Barnes to repudiate Sylvia Caldwell. (See page 309)

The most extraordinary item from Wohlforth's correspondence is his own evaluation of the SWP, a monumental example of political cynicism. Pouring his heart out to a fellow-renegade from the Trotskyist movement, D. Sklavos, Wohlforth describes in extraordinary detail the workings of an

organization which he frankly acknowledges to be a political monstrosity. Wohlforth's description of the SWP Political Committee deserves special attention:

*"PC meetings are held once to twice a week and go on half to a full day. No one (except me with great difficulty) disagrees with anything but that seems to make the meetings even longer because it doesn't stop people from expressing in a thousand different ways their agreement with what in any event has already be (sic) thrashed out and decided elsewhere. (After six months on the PC I am not sure where this is but I assume that it is in private conferences among key operators.)" (See page 303)*

In *The Fourth International and the Renegade Wohlforth*, the Workers League predicted that "Wohlforth's movement to the right has by no means come to a halt. This is a man who is going places. How much further Wohlforth will travel we do not have to predict. Let it merely be said that his future development will be determined by the needs of the ruling class and the speed with which the crisis develops." (See page 204)

This prediction as well has been vindicated. Within a few years of joining the SWP, Wohlforth left the organization — without offering any political explanation. (His former companion, Nancy Fields, also vanished from the SWP.) In 1981 the revisionist journal *New Left Review* published an article by Wohlforth entitled "Transition to the Transition," in which he presented himself as an admirer of Karl Korsch, declared the Marxist concept of the proletarian dictatorship to be inadequate, and grossly falsified the positions of Lenin and Trotsky, declaring at one point that "Lenin saw the dictatorship of the proletariat threatened by — the proletariat!"

In his latest political venture, Wohlforth is now giving lectures under the auspices of Michael Harrington's Democratic Socialists of America. He has thus come full circle. Nearly 30 years ago, Wohlforth broke with Harrington when they were both part of the Shachtmanite movement. Just one decade after his desertion from the Workers League, Wohlforth has returned to the camp of anti-Sovietism and anti-communism. Such a

movement is of a significance that extends far beyond Wohlforth. The driving force of his development is the objective crisis of world capitalism, and in his humiliating personal fate is contained a profound lesson on the significance of the dialectic, which, though not recognized by Wohlforth, nevertheless — as Trotsky once pointed out in relation to Burnham — extends its sway over him.

In the light of a decade, the far-reaching historical implications of the struggle against pragmatism in the United States have been clearly demonstrated. While Wohlforth has repudiated Trotskyism and broken all connections with the revolutionary movement, the Workers League, based on the philosophical and political lessons of this struggle, has made immense strides in the building of the revolutionary party of the American working class, fighting in solidarity with the International Committee of the Fourth International.

More than 45 years ago, Trotsky predicted that history would inevitably provide the United States with "serious lessons in the dialectic." That time is now at hand. It is clear that we are now entering a period of great revolutionary struggles in the United States. The conditions are rapidly maturing for the transformation of the Workers League into the mass revolutionary party. The split with Wohlforth represented an historical milestone in the theoretical and political preparation for this leap. Within the United States and throughout the world, tens of thousands of workers, youth and intellectuals will place themselves under the banner of Trotskyism. We are confident that the documents in this volume, as part of the entire history of the International Committee's struggle against revisionism, will contribute mightily to their training as Marxist revolutionaries, i.e., as dialectical materialists.

D. North  
May 22, 1984

# *What Makes Wohlforth Run?*

**Statement of the  
Political Committee  
of the Workers League**

**April 15, 1975**



# What Makes Wohlforth Run?

Tim Wohlforth, one of the founders of the Workers League, fraternal section of the International Committee of the Fourth International, has deserted the movement and issued a statement entitled, "The Workers League and the International Committee." This document is a wide-ranging and slanderous attack on the method, principles, and history of the Trotskyist movement.

Wohlforth resigned from the Workers League on September 29, 1974. In January of this year he issued his statement and publicly made common cause with the revisionist opponents of the IC, handing over to these forces all the petty gossip and slander which they always eagerly grab in their desperate effort to discredit the Fourth International.

In taking this step, Wohlforth has been forced to reveal his own philosophical position: opposition to dialectical materialism and capitulation to pragmatism and idealism. He has furthermore expressed political agreement with the Socialist Workers Party revisionists in his attacks on the Workers League's perspectives for work in the trade unions and his violent and open opposition to the training of Marxist cadres in both the trade unions and the youth.

Along with this philosophical and political break with Marxism, he has, like Hansen, Robertson and others who preceded him, attacked the history of Trotskyism, broken completely from internationalism and revolutionary centralism, and slandered the leadership of the Workers League and the International Committee.

This disorientation and frenzied attack on Marxism is not accident or mystery. It is a definite sign of big revolutionary struggles on the agenda. The capitalist class desperately needs a base of support, through sophisticated "theories," inside the workers' and revolutionary movement. This is a measure of its own political and ideological weakness.

It continues to rule through its reformist and Stalinist agencies, the spearhead of counterrevolution in the working class. These bureaucracies work to give the imperialists the time they need to prepare brutal dictatorship and fascism. But they can not do their work without a further base of support in the form of revisionism which Lenin described as the distortion of Marxism itself by elements hostile to the working class within the Marxist movement. The revisionists act to liquidate the revolutionary party, thus allowing the bureaucracy to maintain its grip on the working class.

Not only is revisionism absolutely inevitable in the period of imperialism, it also grows especially as revolutionary crises develop. Capitalism gives rise not only to the modern working class, but to intermediate strata, which cannot fail to have their reflection inside the workers' movement. Today new revisionist tendencies sprout as an expression of the disorientation and fear of these middle-class layers as their position in capitalist society is threatened by the irreconcilable class conflict of the capitalist economic crisis.

The Fourth International has been constructed in the battle against revisionism. It was built on the foundations of the first Four Congresses of the Communist International and lessons of the struggles against anarchism and social-democratic reformism. The struggle which led to the founding of the Fourth International in 1938 began 15 years earlier with the fight against bureaucratism in the Soviet Communist Party and the workers' state, initiated by Lenin shortly before his death, with the support of Trotsky. The rising bureaucracy sought to defend its privileges behind revisionist theories of "socialism in one country."

While many oppositions to Stalinism arose in the 1920s and

1930s, including a number of tendencies much more substantial in size than the Trotskyists, only the Fourth International survived. Those groups which tried to maintain an intermediate position between the reformists and Stalinists or between Stalinism and Bolshevism were all destroyed. The Fourth International withstood the most bitter defeats and murderous repression precisely because it developed in continuous struggle against revisionism within its own ranks.

This struggle continues on a far higher level today. The enormous capitalist crisis brings together the revolutionary struggles in the advanced and the semi-colonial countries. It poses everywhere the need to construct revolutionary parties, to break from the propaganda stage to which the Trotskyist movement was confined for many years. The working class is searching for a way to break the grip of the bureaucracy. The response of the ruling class is to step up the ideological, philosophical, and class pressures on the vanguard. The increased bourgeois pressure on the revolutionary movement brings forward attacks on the Fourth International which are unprecedented in their number and intensity.

Liquidationism within the Fourth International took the form of Pabloite revisionism in the early 1950s. The Pabloites substituted impressionistic theories of imminent war-revolution based upon the strength of imperialism and Stalinism for an objective understanding of the crisis. Flowing from their anti-Marxist theories they attempted to liquidate the parties of the Fourth International into the Stalinist and Social-Democratic bureaucracies, and later into uncritical support for the petty-bourgeois nationalists in the colonial countries. They were prevented from liquidating the Fourth International by the founding of the International Committee of the Fourth International in 1953, which has continued and deepened the struggle against revisionism since that time.

The Pabloites were joined by the US Socialist Workers Party, which deserted the IC, eventually joining forces with the revisionists in 1963 (although prevented from maintaining any organizational affiliation by the reactionary Voorhis Act).

The French OCI took a similar path in 1971, when it broke with the IC, counterposing "the program" to the Marxist method, and opposing dialectical materialism as the theory of knowledge of Marxism which must be fought for in the construction of revolutionary parties. Now the crisis drives the SWP and OCI together in friendly discussion, united in common opposition to dialectics and in capitulation to liberalism and reformism.

The revisionists have also been reinforced by a host of tiny, new groups and individuals who have deserted the IC, such as Blick-Jenkins and Thornett in Britain, and Wohlforth in the United States.

This new form of revisionism now emerges precisely because capitalism objectively requires more sophisticated apologists to cover up the counterrevolutionary role of Stalinism, Social Democracy and the trade union bureaucrats. It is no accident that these tendencies, Blick-Jenkins, Thornett, Wohlforth, find themselves in political agreement on all basic questions. Revisionism has always emerged, and will continue to do so, as an international tendency, as the expression of bourgeois pressure within the Marxist movement.

All these tendencies, each having its own particular history and starting point, are unanimous in their denunciation of the International Committee as "ultimatistic," "sectarian," "bureaucratic." What they consider "sectarian" is our irreconcilable struggle for revolutionary leadership in the working class against all the agencies of capital and bureaucracy. Unable to win any following within the International Committee to their liquidationist perspectives, they try to smash the democratic centralist principles upon which our movement, in continuity with Bolshevism, is constructed.

These forces are the direct reflection of the panic and rightward movement of sections of the middle class internationally who are being confronted with social extinction by the enormous development of the economic crisis. Their hostility expresses itself so vehemently now against the revolutionary movement because they now sense that they can no longer

adapt themselves to revolutionary politics through a propaganda and circle existence.

The crisis means that today the forces of the International Committee are being transformed into revolutionary working-class parties and the forces of bureaucracy are in their greatest crisis in history.

It is this new objective situation which transforms these tendencies into the vehicles for the most reactionary class pressures within the revolutionary movement. This is the role now assumed by Wohlforth.

For us, the struggle against revisionism is the core of our struggle to build the revolutionary party and the Fourth International. In that sense we unreservedly welcome Wohlforth's challenge. He does not have an ounce of support within our party, but we would not be fulfilling the obligation of training ourselves and all the new forces coming toward the revolutionary party if we did not expose exactly where he stands. We can add very little to what Lenin wrote over 70 years ago about Wohlforth's predecessors:

*"We are marching in a compact group along a precipitous and difficult path, firmly holding each other by the hand. We are surrounded on all sides by enemies, and we have to advance almost constantly under their fire. We have combined, by a freely adopted decision, for the purpose of fighting the enemy, and not of retreating into the neighboring marsh, the inhabitants of which, from the very outset, have reproached us with having separated ourselves into an exclusive group and with having chosen the path of struggle instead of the path of conciliation. And now some among us begin to cry out: Let us go into the marsh! And when we begin to shame them, they retort: What backward people you are! Are you not ashamed to deny us the liberty to invite you to take a better road! Oh, yes, gentlemen! You are free not only to invite us, but to go yourselves wherever you will, even into the marsh. In fact, we think that the marsh is your proper place, and we are prepared to render you every assistance to get there. Only let go of our hands, don't clutch at us and don't besmirch the grand word freedom, for we too are 'free' to go where we please, free to fight not only against the marsh, but also against those who are turning towards the marsh."*

## **PRAGMATISM VS. MARXISM**

The struggle for Marxism against the spontaneous thinking of the working class, which is the expression of bourgeois ideology, has a very real and concrete content. It is by no means a fight over words or abstract concepts which have no practical significance. On the contrary, this is a struggle to train and equip the party (which exists in class society and is never free from the ideological pressures of the bourgeoisie) to carry out the practical tasks that are necessary to win the leadership of the working class in the struggle to win state power.

Wohlforth's abandonment of revolutionary politics and all the practical tasks that flow from it comes out of and at the same time reinforces his abandonment of Marxist philosophy. He has gone over to the bourgeois philosophy of American pragmatism. He has turned his back on the whole history of the struggle of the International Committee and the Workers League to train a cadre in dialectical materialism against the pragmatist traditions inherited from American capitalism. At the heart of this struggle against pragmatism has been the question of the relation between theory and practice.

Marxists begin from the unity and conflict of theory and practice. Practice is based on an objective understanding of matter in motion. Theory is the abstracted essence, the universal laws, that reflect the universal movement of matter. Theory arises ultimately (though not in a direct, immediate way, but mediated through the superstructural forms of society) out of man's collective social practice. It is not simply a result of the immediate experiences of the individual. The latter is the theory of empiricism and impressionism, and is only a rationale for the practice the individual is already engaged in. Such "practice" and the "theory" explaining it when they accept this standpoint, are always based on certain unstated assumptions which are spontaneously, i.e., unconsciously, adhered to. These assumptions are always the ideological premises of the dominant class in society.

Pragmatism is the specific form of bourgeois ideology that developed in America, in close relation with British empiricism.

Its specific contribution, as opposed to other forms of bourgeois ideology, was to introduce the criterion of practice as the criterion of truth. Behind this stress on practice, however, lies the conception of a merging together of the subjective and the objective in something called "experience," which is neither matter nor mind.

For William James, experience transcends the conflict between thinking and being. Thus the criterion of practice becomes nothing more than that of individual expediency, since what "works" for the individual is what will upset him the least and bring him into the least conflict with the objective world. Thereby the objectivity of knowledge as well as the objectivity of practice is abolished. In this way, pragmatism leads to the most reactionary, subjective idealist conclusions under the guise of being concerned with "practical affairs." Wohlforth has now adopted these methods of American pragmatism while trying to give them Marxist credentials. His capitulation to pragmatism and empiricism is most clearly revealed in what he says about the particular and universal.

He states: "We begin at every point from a concrete, from a particular. The dialectical process can never begin from a universal." It is clear from this comment that Wohlforth has joined the revisionists Hansen and Novack in their attack on dialectics and capitulation to empiricism and pragmatism. Lenin's famous essay "On the Question of Dialectics" is devoted largely to this very question of the universal and the particular.

"To begin with what is the simplest, most ordinary, common, etc., with any proposition: the leaves of a tree are green; John is a man; Fido is a dog, etc. here already we have dialectics (as Hegel's genius recognized): the individual is the universal. Consequently, the opposites (the individual is opposed to the universal) are identical: the individual exists only in the connection that leads to the universal. The universal exists only in the individual and through the individual. Every individual is (in one way or another) a universal. Every universal is (a fragment, or an aspect, or the essence of) an individual. Every universal

**only approximately embraces all the individual objects. Every individual enters incompletely into the universal, etc., etc. . . ."**

The universal and particular are dialectical opposites. The Marxist begins with the unity and conflict of opposites, not with one opposite. We begin with the particular and the universal, the particular as the expression of the universal, not divorced from the universal, unconnected to the universal. They cannot be counterposed to one another any more than a specific tree is counterposed to the universal "tree." Lenin in his *Philosophical Notebooks* quotes Hegel on this subject not once, but dozens of times. "Thus, all opposites which are taken as fixed such as, for example, finite and infinite, or individual and universal, are contradictory not by virtue of some external connection, but rather are transitions in and for themselves, as the consideration of their nature showed . . ."

To say that we begin from the particular is not only to make an incorrect statement about cognition. Worse than that, it also means that the material world which we reflect excludes the universal. This is nothing but the standpoint of skepticism, which denies the objectivity of knowledge precisely because it denies that there can be real knowledge of anything beyond the sum of our sensations, that the movement of matter itself is always lawful, reflecting universality at every moment through its particularity. This epistemological agnosticism was the standpoint of Kantianism, which refused to acknowledge the universal as inherent in matter, but instead maintained that the universal was the product of the mind that organizes the "given" sense data, which in themselves have no coherency or lawfulness. In this way, pragmatism and Kantianism cut thinking and perception adrift from the universal matter in motion which are their basis, adrift from the never-ending transitions of all forms of matter into one another. They separate matter (abstracted into a "thing in itself") from the thinking, from the brain. This skeptical, idealist position was attacked by Lenin in his *Philosophical Notebooks*. He wrote: "Nature is *both concrete and abstract; both phenomenon and essence; both moment and relation.*"

And again, "Hegel is for the 'objective validity of semblance,' of that which is immediately given. The more petty philosophers dispute whether essence *or* that which is immediately given should be taken as basis (Kant, Hume, all the Machists). Instead of *or*, Hegel puts *and*, explaining the concrete content of this *and*." (Volume 38, *Philosophical Notebooks*)

Hegel is for the objective validity of semblance because the perception of semblance is a necessary step to grasping the necessary forms in which the universal is expressed. Wohlforth now joins the petty philosophers in the dispute over the reality of essence or appearance, and he chooses appearance.

This central question of where we begin was at the heart of the battle inside the International Committee of the Fourth International against the revisionists of the Socialist Workers Party leadership in 1961-1963. The SWP spokesmen Hansen and Novack maintained and maintain to this day that the starting point for Marxists is the same as for the empiricists: "the facts," or as Wohlforth would have it, the particular.

This is the method employed by Wohlforth in his statement. He begins from the particular — from the events in Boston, his impressions of the developments in the unions and in the mines, and the "latest trends" among the youth. His method is the same as that of the revisionists, and, as we shall see, he ends up with similar conclusions.

Of course, a Marxist analysis is an analysis of the facts. In "Opportunism and Empiricism," a resolution adopted unanimously by the National Committee of the Socialist Labor League in March, 1963, the British Trotskyists discussed the SWP's devotion to "the facts" as expressed in their capitulation to the so-called new world reality and their prostration before the Castro leadership in Cuba.

*"Dialectical analysis insists on seeing facts in the context of a whole series of interrelated processes, not as finished, independent entities about which 'practical' decisions have to be made. In the sphere of politics, that means to see each situation in terms of the development of the international class struggle, to evaluate the*

*policies of the various political forces towards the situation in terms of their relations to these class forces and to their whole previous course . . .*

*"When we attack empiricism we attack that method of approach which says all statements, to be meaningful, must refer to observable or measurable data in their immediately given form. This method insists that any 'abstract' concepts, reflecting the general and historical implications of these 'facts,' are meaningless. It neglects entirely that our general concepts reflect the laws of development and interconnection of the process which these 'facts' help to constitute. Indeed, the so-called 'hard facts' of concrete experience are themselves **abstractions** from this process. They are the result of the first approximation of our brains to the essential interrelations, laws of motion, contradictions of the eternally changing and complex world of matter . . . of which they form part. Only higher abstractions, in advanced **theory**, can guide us to the meaning of these facts. What Lenin called 'the concrete analysis of concrete conditions' is the opposite of a descent into empiricism. In order to be concrete, the analysis must see the given facts in their historical interconnection and must begin with the discoveries of theory in the study of society, the necessity to make a **class** evaluation of every event, every phenomenon . . ."*

Lenin himself was very specific. "Every concrete thing, every concrete something, stands in multifarious and often contradictory relation to everything else, *ergo*, it is itself and some other," and: "The *infinite* sum of general conceptions, laws, etc., gives the *concrete* in its completeness."

Wohlforth's allegiance to the camp of the petty philosophers who begin with the appearance (the particular) is of great importance. In this way, Wohlforth tries to present a one-sided distortion of the history of the struggle for Marxism. He makes the case that Marxism is simply opposed to rationalism, and denies the historical struggle against empiricism and its cousin pragmatism. This is what is behind Wohlforth's counterposing of the method of rationalism (beginning with the universal) which he falsely ascribes to us, with the method of empiricism (beginning with the particular). This kind of distortion of Marxism has already been pioneered by George Novack in his

*Empiricism and its Evolution*, where Novack tries to make the case that Marxism is the consistent development of empiricism and that it is squarely opposed to rationalist idealism, but not to empiricism. The International Committee answered Novack in *In Defense of Trotskyism*:

*"Characteristically, Novack equates empiricism and materialism, and then insists that 'empiricism's knowledge is based on the experience of our senses' is progressive. French materialism of the 18th century took Locke's basic premise and combined it in various ways with the rationalism derived from Descartes in the onslaught on the old regime and its ideology in the period up to 1789. Empiricism as a 'theory' of cognition set very definite limits to the development of knowledge, and, as Diderot noted very early, could result in the skepticism of Hume and the idealism of Bishop Berkeley, the godfathers of modern reactionary philosophy from Mach to Wittgenstein."* (Page 24)

Wohlforth follows the SWP and the OCI on this question. That is why he denies that the methods of rationalism and empiricism are complementary and most often coexist within a single individual.

Thus, to him there are only abstract propagandists and activists, but not the propagandist who is at the same time an activist. Wohlforth's practice in the party was precisely this combination of impressionism and rationalism. He proceeded from his impressions (the particular) and on the basis of these impressions developed abstract schemas, which he mistook for the universal. Practice became a matter of trying to impose these abstract schemas on a material world to which they did not correspond, since it had its own mode of existence, its own laws of motion. Impressions of backward trade unionists and revolutionary youth led to the abstract schema of constructing a movement which counterposed the youth as a "thing in itself" to the trade unionists. "Practice" was undertaken to demonstrate the correctness of this schema, and came into sharp collision with the real development of the working class.

We have already shown that while Wohlforth says we begin from the particular, Marxists begin from the unity and conflict

of the particular and the universal. Wohlforth, however, does not stop there — he identifies the particular with the concrete and says that we begin from the concrete.

This again is the method of empiricism which identifies the concrete with our immediate impressions. For Marxists, objective knowledge corresponding to the concrete development of matter in motion is the **result** of the process of cognition, not its beginning. We begin from living perception, itself a unity and conflict of opposites, our practice in the party, out of which we develop approximate cognition of things, of matter in motion which includes the particular and universal united in their conflict. This relative truth (which contains absolute truth as an opposite within it, since it is itself a “moment” of the infinite process towards objective truth) is then posited against our abstract understanding of the class struggle in its necessary, law-governed development. Out of this conflict, we develop the abstract essence of new knowledge which must then be negated in our practice. Throughout this process, knowledge is developed in a contradictory way through the moments of living perception, abstraction and practice, from a relatively vaguely defined understanding (which contains an element of truth) to a richer, more concrete understanding to the Notion. Thus, the concept “concrete” is itself relative. The process of cognition takes us to an increasingly concrete truth, without ever being completed. To identify the concrete with our first impressions, as Wohlforth does, is to lapse into the unscientific method that mistakes what Marx called the “imaginary concrete” with what is truly concrete. Lenin said the following on this question:

*“The significance of the **universal** is contradictory; it is dead, impure, incomplete, etc., etc., but it alone is a **stage** towards knowledge of the concrete, for we can never know the concrete completely. The **infinite** sum of general conceptions, laws, etc., gives the concrete in its completeness.”* (Volume 38, page 279)

Wohlforth’s claim that it is the International Committee which has suddenly made “philosophical innovations” is the most dishonest piece of hypocrisy. The resolution of the SLL,

"Opportunism and Empiricism," which Wohlforth supported in 1963, makes it quite clear that we have always rejected the method of "beginning with the particular," the imaginary concrete. But in case Wohlforth forgot this statement, let us see what *In Defence of Trotskyism* stated. This was written in late 1972.

*"The coincidence of thought with objective reality is a process. The truly concrete (objective) is not an immediately given concrete fact' but it is reached by the path from experience through analysis back to synthesis achieved by practice." (Page 32)*

This was a statement which was studied and discussed by all the member sections and those in political solidarity with the International Committee, including Wohlforth. Wohlforth never put forward any differences with it at that time or ever since. He of course has the freedom today to turn his back on the consistent struggle of the International Committee for Marxist philosophy which he previously supported. We will not allow him, however, to pass off his philosophical break with Marxism by falsely accusing the International Committee of making revisionist "innovations."

## CAPITULATION TO BUREAUCRACY

Though Wohlforth refuses to write on the economic crisis or on political developments in this period of enormous struggles, he does have a perspective. His capitulation to empiricism and pragmatism leads him very rapidly to what Trotsky called prostration before the accomplished fact.

The pragmatist, consistent with his theory of knowledge, adapts to the surface appearance, instead of struggling through the contradictory appearance to the essence it expresses; he seeks to avoid the conflict between theory and practice in the building of the party. His break from dialectics does not of course free Wohlforth from the dialectic of his own development. He is forced to break with the principles and policies for which he himself fought for many years.

The International Committee and the Workers League

fought to base themselves upon the development of the crisis and the class struggle. The revisionists began with their impression of the strength of capitalism and the backwardness of the working class. During the boom, they mocked our concern with the development of the economic crisis and our insistence that the working class was the only revolutionary class under capitalism.

Now, ironically, as the explosive development of the crisis destroys the revisionists' theories of "neo-capitalism," the "new working class," and so forth, Wohlforth goes over to their positions.

Wohlforth denounces the Workers League for making "no concrete assessment of the actual unfolding of the crisis . . ." He explains:

*"The productive forces are in an absolute conflict with the productive relations in only the general sense that capitalism as an international system is no longer growing. Production, however, continues. The question is to assess how it continues. What will happen in the next stage of the crisis and what politically flows from the way the capitalists seek to continue under these conditions, and how the working class seeks to resist the attacks upon it? Without such a concrete assessment, we have only the old theory of the imminent collapse of capital which the Lambert group borrowed from Pablo."*

It is Wohlforth who refuses to begin with a materialist assessment of the crisis. In a 40-page document which sets out to prove that the Workers League has succumbed to centrism, he writes many thousands of words on his impressions and above all on the allegedly unfair treatment to which he has been subjected, but nowhere does he analyze this crisis facing the working class.

Nevertheless, his analysis can and must be drawn from his comments on our assessment. Even the bourgeois pollsters report that 35 percent of those asked believe we are already in a depression. Wohlforth accuses us of the theory of imminent collapse. He simply joins all the revisionists from the SWP through Mandel to Spartacist in their attack on the alleged

crisis-mongering of the International Committee.

Our movement has traced the end of the boom, the working out of all the contradictions of capitalism, the period of uncontrolled inflation opened up with the decisions of August 1971, and finally, the economic slump which has begun. The revisionists' bankruptcy has been completely exposed. Mandel, the arch-revisionist exponent of "neo-capitalism," still maintains that capitalism is entering not a period of war and revolution, but "cycles of slower growth."

This is Wohlforth's position. Of course, not every factory has shut down, nor has there ever been simply a situation of absolute collapse from which there can be no recovery. But capitalism today can recover only by destroying hundreds and hundreds of billions of dollars of fictitious capital, along with the millions of workers whose living standards during the boom have depended on it. We have made this concrete assessment by the development of the economic crisis, and what it means in the threat of war and dictatorship. It is this which poses all the revolutionary tasks and opportunities before our movement.

But while unemployment hits the highest levels in almost 40 years, banks fail, and nations are on the verge of bankruptcy, Wohlforth is most anxious to assure us that production continues!

While capitalism faces its most severe crisis in history, he reassures himself that ... the world goes on! Wohlforth's position is that capitalism can weather this crisis. In seeking to justify his own desertion from the revolutionary party, he complacently denies the crisis just as do all the other revisionists.

For an objective assessment of the crisis, Wohlforth substitutes the following subjective impression:

*"The working class develops unevenly. The older workers today are willing to struggle within the trade unions where they have strength to do so. (?) These struggles are of the greatest importance and they have a major impact on the class relations and the economic crisis itself. But, at the same time, these older workers are not yet ready to grasp revolutionary politics in any significant*

*number or, as yet, to take any action in their unions for a labor party. They remain very much as syndicalists in their thinking at this point. However, the conditions are already being created for a swift change in this thinking at the next point of the struggle.*

*"With the working class youth, the situation is different. These youth have no future now. It is among these youth that the forces who can grasp the question of revolution immediately are to be found. It is not that these youth can make a revolution now. But they can grasp revolutionary thinking. A revolutionary movement must be built of revolutionary material. These youth represent such material. This is why they must represent the heart of a revolutionary party today. Only a party based primarily among working class youth can be revolutionary in this period and as a revolutionary party, fight out all the problems of development within the working class as a whole."*

Elsewhere, Wohlforth says that all trade union work must be "subordinated to the general party tasks of this period." These he defines as "the construction of a youth movement and with this movement, building the party press and party branches in the central industrial cities of the country . . ."

Substitute "international youth radicalization" for "working class youth" and we are left with a position identical to that of the revisionists. They have claimed for more than a decade that the working class is not in motion "at this point." Later, "at the next point," they will take up the struggle. In the meantime, we must orient to "where the action is." They insist that revolutionary material cannot be found in the working class, and we must search for it elsewhere — the colonial peasantry, the students, the "radical milieu . . ."

This was the SWP's pragmatic justification for the adaptation to Castroism, black nationalism, and the antiwar coalitions based on middle-class protest. Our party has been constructed in a long and bitter struggle against the pragmatism now peddled by Wohlforth.

But of course it is not just a matter of verbal differences. We always fought to the best of our ability to penetrate the working class, to intervene in all of its struggles. We did not ignore the developments in the middle class or the role of the

revisionists at all. Precisely by turning outward to the working class, we deepened our knowledge of revisionism and its role in the workers' movement.

While Wohlforth has been writing his sneering comments about the willingness of workers to fight back "where they have the strength to do so," subjectively deciding that they are not ready to fight for a labor party, and insisting that they, unlike the youth, have a future today, the Workers League has been fighting and making very different experiences inside the working class, proving in practice that the struggle of the class does not at all correspond to the impressions of Wohlforth.

All over the country, in the long strike of the Borax workers in California, in the miners strike, in the struggles in auto and in the shipyards in Brooklyn, thousands and thousands of workers have been forced to fight back against the treachery of their own leaders and have been forced to confront all the political questions.

In the past several months, the Workers League has had valuable experiences in recruiting and training young workers. As the bureaucracy has drawn closer and closer to the employers and to the capitalist state, we have had to fight out the question of the nature of the bureaucracy and its connection with the government. The fight for revolutionary leadership is the center of all these struggles. Of course, this could not even begin if we took the standpoint that the workers will not fight for a labor party, or, as Wohlforth says elsewhere, the "trade unions are not yet political."

When do the trade unions become political? And how can that process be allowed to take place without the revolutionary party being preoccupied with every development? We are discussing the process of revolution itself. Wohlforth takes the position that since it is not yet here, we must wait for it. This is nothing but the most complete capitulation to spontaneity, covered with a thin veneer of orthodoxy and radical phrases. We must fight for Marxism in the unions, not, like the revisionists, capitulate to the bureaucracy behind the mask of waiting for the objective conditions to throw up revolutionary

leadership. That will in any case not happen. Both the SWP and Wohlforth, as we shall show, go much further than merely waiting. Their pragmatic rejection of the necessary struggle of the party in the class and the trade unions leads them to seek shortcuts to revolutionary leadership and to adapt to a section of the trade union bureaucracy.

In the 1938 discussions with the leaders of the SWP on the labor party slogan, Trotsky fought against the narrow, pragmatic conception of beginning with whether the workers or the unions were "political." When someone complained, "There is no evidence to indicate any widespread sentiment for such a party," Trotsky answered, "You will remember that when we discussed this question with other comrades there were some divergences on this question. I cannot judge whether sentiment for a labor party exists or not because I have no personal observations or impressions, but I do not find it decisive as to what degree the leaders of the trade unions or the rank and file are ready or inclined to build a political party. It is very difficult to establish objective information. We have no machine to take a referendum. We can measure the mood only by action if the slogan is put on the agenda. But what we can say is that the objective situation is absolutely decisive . . .

*"I say here what I said about the whole program of transitional demands. The problem is not the mood of the masses, but the objective situation, and our job is to confront the backward material of the masses with the tasks which are determined by objective facts and not by psychology. The same is absolutely correct for this specific question on the labor party. If the class struggle is not to be crushed by demoralization, then the movement must find a new channel and this channel is political. This is the fundamental argument in favor of this slogan.*

*"We claim to have Marxism or Scientific Socialism. What does 'Scientific Socialism' signify in reality? It signifies that the party which represents this social science, departs, as every science, not from subjective wishes, tendencies, or moods but from objective facts, from the material situation of the different classes and their relationships. Only by this method can we establish demands adequate to the objective situation, and only after this can we adapt*

*these demands and slogans to the given mentality of the masses. But to begin with the mentality as the fundamental fact would signify not a scientific but a conjunctural, demagogic, or adventurist policy."*

Because Wohlforth begins with the mentality, he gives a distorted picture of it. For the mentality cannot be grasped apart from the objective situation and the struggle of the party to change it. The mood can be measured only by action and action flowing from the objective crisis is decisive.

Wohlforth's insistence on the revolutionary role of the youth is a complete fraud. He cannot grasp the extremely important role which must be played by the working class youth and also by the students in the construction of the revolutionary party. This cannot be understood if these forces are counterposed to the working class and the trade unions. The position that we can base ourselves only on the youth, counterposing them to the "conservative" older workers, is again the Kantian separating out of a "thing in itself," the youth in this case, from the material unity in which it must actually struggle. Everything depends on the conscious struggle of the leadership to educate the youth in the struggle inside the party, enabling them to treat their activity and experience as the source of new knowledge and new revolutionary practice. Insofar as the party meets with hesitation from some workers still scarred by defeat and betrayal, it draws from the struggle against this the lessons necessary for the development of the youth itself. Through this experience and education the youth are trained to fight idealism and individualism. Only if we start in this way can we get the necessary theoretical revolutionary development from all the new forces, trade unionists as well as youth, coming forward in the struggle. There will be examples of the most backward, non-union workers, moving to the fore of the struggle.

It is impossible to build a youth movement without training the youth as leaders in the class struggle, including the actual fight to construct a revolutionary leadership in the trade unions. Wohlforth seeks instead to train the youth with his own

pessimism and hostility to the working class. His pragmatic method leads him to fight against the unity of the working class itself, and to destroy the Bolshevik conception of the revolutionary party and its practice.

He is not the first to have travelled this road, by any means. The French OCI recruited thousands of youth in the period after the May-June General Strike in 1968. It brought 10,000 youth to a rally at Le Bourget Airport in Paris in 1970, but literally had nothing to say to these youth, no perspective and policies to fight for. By the time of the Essen conference which it organized in 1971, this turn away from the fight for Marxism and perspectives among the youth had turned into an open break with Trotskyism. The OCI by this time was ready to line up openly with the centrists against the delegation of the British Young Socialists and its amendment on the struggle for dialectical materialism among the youth.

The OCI and the SWP both miseducated the student and youth forces who were attracted by Trotskyism in the 1960s. They led these youth to capitulation to bourgeois ideology and prepared the forces inside their own ranks which would drive them further and further to the right. These class pressures would come to dominate in any party which began with a pragmatic adaptation to so-called revolutionary forces, with an adaptation to the spontaneous thinking of trade unionists, working class youth, or students. This is the content of Wohlforth's comments about the youth, and it is totally hostile to their really revolutionary role.

Wohlforth makes much of his opposition to syndicalism and to the conception that a trade union policy begins within the unions. His accusation that that is the position of the Workers League is completely false. But, precisely because he begins with acceptance of present consciousness and with a contemplative position, he himself capitulates to the trade union bureaucracy. The other side of his contempt for the working class is this kowtowing to the bureaucracy.

This is sharply expressed in his comments on the miners strike of November 1974: "The very nature of mining in the

United States places a great limit upon our ability to intervene in a party way. The mines are located in a culturally backward part of the country, distant from any cities. At this stage in the development of the American working class, it is not possible to build significant party branches in the small towns of the rural mining areas. An intervention in the miners union is then primarily for the understanding and training of workers elsewhere for the construction of branches in cities like Cleveland, Pittsburgh, and Youngstown."

Wohlforth begins as always with the separation of theory and practice and not the continuous struggle to unite them. This is the arrogance of the smug and complacent middle class, not fundamentally different from the rantings of the SWP against the "backward, racist" American working class. We begin with the conflict between the bureaucracy and the ranks and with the strength and movement of the working class, given revolutionary leadership, breaking through the grip of the bureaucracy, a unity of opposites. The revisionists begin with the power of the bureaucracy and the capitalist class and the permanence of capitalism itself.

Wohlforth parrots the revisionists, going even further than them in his accusations against the Workers League for allegedly adapting to the old Boyle elements in the United Mine Workers. He is obsessed with the bureaucracy. "Miller led a massive movement of rank and file miners against the corrupt Boyle leadership," he writes. Denouncing our policy during the strike, he says the orientation should have been "toward the forces around Miller."

We beg to differ with Wohlforth. Miller did not lead the movement, but jumped onto it in order to channel it into the arms of the government. We agree with Trotsky when he explained that the leadership of the American trade unions "reflects not so much the proletariat as the bourgeoisie." We do not orient toward Miller or Boyle, but toward the tens of thousands of miners forced into struggle to defend their basic rights.

Wohlforth explains that the Workers League correctly gave

critical support to Miller when he ran against Boyle in 1972. But he does not explain that we were criticized very sharply by our British comrades at the time for not very sharply warning about Miller's complete collaboration with the government and the way the Labor Department was brought in to virtually run the union and the election. This was just one of many serious philosophical and political differences developed by Wohlforth over the past two years, which he attempted to hide and slur over in typical opportunist fashion.

It is extremely significant that Wohlforth on this issue also joins with the SWP and the Stalinists in raising the specter of Boyle's return. In the midst of a great and powerful movement of miners against the collaboration of their trade union leadership with the government, they side with the bureaucracy. They do not have a single Marxist conception in their brains. Indeed, they fear the revolutionary struggle. Wohlforth's vicious comments about the "backward" and "ignorant" miners, and his invocation of Boyle's ghost, bring to mind the "warnings" of the Stalinists that the revolutionary actions of the working class, whether in Portugal today or Hungary in 1956, only aid reaction. Wohlforth's policy must be called by its right name. It is the same as that of the SWP, adaptation to the so-called "progressive wing" of the trade union bureaucracy. Like all the revisionists, Wohlforth hates our intransigent struggle for Marxism and our determined fight to train revolutionary cadres inside the unions. All trade union policy is subordinate to this strategic task. It is Wohlforth, precisely because of his cavalier indifference to trade union policy and his despair of doing anything in the trade unions, who winds up adapting to the present leadership and backing the bureaucracy.

Wohlforth begins his statement with the events in Boston, the dispute over the school busing issue and the activities of the racists and fascists. This, too, expresses his going over to the revisionists. He begins exactly as they do, with the plans of the ruling class and the working class seen only as a passive object of history. Wohlforth is lying when he accuses us of ignoring or underestimating the dangers from the right-wing or the

development of racial or sectarian divisions. The revisionists made the same accusation in Northern Ireland because the SLL (later the WRP) did not capitulate politically to the petty bourgeois leadership of the IRA or the civil rights movement. But unlike Wohlforth and his revisionist friends, we do not place the responsibility for these dangers at the feet of the working class. The dangers of racism flow directly from the economic crisis and the betrayals of the trade union bureaucracy as well as the conscious policies of the liberals. These are the very same forces with whom the revisionists unite and to whom they turn in their protest activities. And Wohlforth is with them, attacking the Workers League for its absolutely correct and principled opposition to the liberals and revisionists.

How else can Wohlforth's statement about the revisionist-sponsored protest march in Boston be understood? He terms this protest a test for all tendencies, and then states that "none failed it so completely as the Workers League."

The revisionists of the SWP demanded that federal troops be sent to Boston to protect the black school children. They consistently welcome the intervention of the capitalist state in the unions and the working class communities and back up all those forces in the labor movement which are closest to the government. Yet, according to Wohlforth, they did not fail the test of Boston "completely," or "not as completely" as the Workers League, which fought in a completely principled manner against the demand for troops, and to mobilize support inside the trade unions against the racists. When Wohlforth joined the SWP-sponsored Boston protest march, only shortly after resigning from the Workers League, he was openly and demonstratively accepting the liquidationist politics which we have fought against since 1963.

Wohlforth's attack on this issue stands together with his positions on the economic crisis, the development of the working class, the training of cadres in the trade unions and the youth, and the role of the trade union bureaucracy. These positions all flow directly from his capitulation to pragmatism

and his frenzied attempt to defend his own subjective prestige and position against the international movement. That is why, within a period of a few months outside the revolutionary movement, he has turned so violently and so completely against his own political history.

### **SUBJECTIVE IDEALISM & DIALECTICS**

Wohlforth's words about dialectics and the "struggle of opposites" are just that — words. He tries to paint himself as a defender of dialectics, against the "centrist metaphysics" of the International Committee. Unfortunately for Wohlforth, this attempt to cover his own break from dialectics with "dialectical-sounding" phrases will not succeed.

Dialectics is the logic of Marxism. The laws of dialectics in our heads are the reflection of the actual contradictory movement of matter. When we speak of a conflict of opposites, therefore, we are speaking of this movement of matter. This movement of matter cannot be understood unless the different moments of the entire dialectical process are carefully followed. Wohlforth wishes to replace this **materialist** investigation, which is the content of the dialectic, with empty talk about "conflict" and "struggle." Behind his demagogic pronouncements about "struggle of opposites" lies a fundamental rejection of materialism and the dialectical method.

The basis for this rejection of materialism lies in the theory of knowledge of empiricism and pragmatism which Wohlforth has embraced. Pragmatism is characterized by a rejection of the unity and conflict of theory and practice, or what amounts to the same thing, the conflict between the objective (matter in motion in its different forms) and the subjective, the conscious reflection in our brain of this process, of which we are likewise a part. It is only when we posit living perception of the objective world on our abstract conceptions that we move towards objective knowledge, which is taken into and proved by practice in which we transform the object.

Thus, for Marxists, the objectivity, the scientific validity of our concepts is realized in practice which is higher than theory

n this sense. Practice in turn is at every point guided by our understanding of the lawful behavior of the object we engage.

The pragmatist, on the other hand, denies the unity and conflict of theory and practice. Instead, he tries to merge theory and practice into "experience." His practice is an unscientific and subjective practice, based on what works for him in his immediate situation. "Theory" for the pragmatist is his conceptualization of those aspects of his practice which do not call into question his present activity.

"Theory" therefore becomes a system of self-rationalizations. Pragmatism represents thereby the nadir of bourgeois philosophy. It replaces the scientific pursuit of knowledge motivated by social practice and arising out of it, such as was expressed in an earlier period of bourgeois thought in the form of Hegel's objective idealism or the mechanical materialism of the French philosophers, with a crude subjective idealism whereby the age-old distinction, necessary for all science, between opinion and knowledge (knowledge as reflection of reality) is abolished.

Pragmatism, however, does not necessarily reject the practical results of science. On the contrary, it borrows eclectically from the consequences of science those aspects it finds beneficial. Thus, eclecticism, an arbitrary picking and choosing out of a coherent totality (in this case, the totality of scientific activity) is likewise characteristic of pragmatism. This picking and choosing of course goes hand in hand with a failure to critically examine one's own practice in order to change it, to bring it into line with the needs of historical necessity.

Wohlforth's document is completely dominated by this pragmatic method. Nowhere is he capable of questioning his own practice. In order to justify himself, he is forced into falsification and slander against the revolutionary movement. Nowhere is there any objective assessment of the economic crisis, the starting point for Marxists for any understanding of our political tasks.

Political and class analysis is rejected by Wohlforth in favor of psychological speculation about the motives of this or that

person in the manner of all subjective idealists. Above all, Wohlforth the individual must defend himself and his practice against the objective needs of the revolutionary movement.

Wohlforth picks and chooses those aspects of the dialectic, or to be more correct, some of the phraseology of dialectics, in order to suit his own immediate purposes. He never stops to consider that if dialectics is the conscious reflection in our minds of the movement of matter in its most general terms, an assimilation of dialectics demands a scientific study of all its aspects. You can pick and choose what you like, but matter in motion, which dialectics reflects, behaves according to its own laws, not your subjective disposition.

This subjective picking and choosing is the meaning behind Wohlforth's employment of the slogan "struggle of opposites." What Wohlforth means is that he chooses whatever opposites come into his head. He never sees the struggle of opposites as an objective process. It is always a matter of his judgment and his assessment of which opposites exist, and of what their significance may be. This is exactly the method of pragmatism.

Wohlforth sees opposites as eternally exclusive and fixed instead of in their unity and conflict, interpenetration and transformation. Thus, even where Wohlforth's recognition of certain opposites might coincide with objective reality, this does not constitute dialectics. Engels, for instance, writes in *Dialectics of Nature*:

*"Two philosophical tendencies, the metaphysical with fixed categories, the dialectical (especially Aristotle and Hegel) with fluid categories, the proofs that those fixed opposites of basis and consequence, cause and effect, identity and difference, appearance and essence are untenable, that analysis shows one pole already present in the other in nuce, that at a definite point the one pole becomes transformed into the other, and that all logic develops only from these progressing contradictions."* (Page 153)

The description of fixed opposites is not dialectics, but metaphysics. This is certainly Wohlforth's method. Throughout his document, he sees opposites as fixed. They can be beaten down sometimes, but never transformed. This retreat into

metaphysics is the expression of Wohlforth's refusal to change, to break from his propagandist past (which is complementary to activism, and by no means excludes it) in order to face up to the new tasks posed by the rapid development of the crisis.

The political conclusions to which Wohlforth is led show that a fraud his talk of "struggle of opposites" is. He ends up adapting to the spontaneous thinking of the youth, abstaining from the fight against (and most recently openly going over to) the trade union bureaucracy. He wants to abandon the struggle against the spontaneously developed thinking of the working class, which is always limited to the horizons of bourgeois ideology. In this way, he sees the relationship of the party to the working class as a simple unity without conflict, in the manner of all centrists and syndicalists.

Wohlforth claims that a turn away from dialectics began with lectures given in the summer of 1974 by Comrade Gerry Healy, Secretary of the Workers Revolutionary Party.

*"His main emphasis on transitions can become a concession to centrist metaphysics which envisions fixed entities which survive the process of contradiction and provide transition and continuity to the processes of matter and life. But as we have discussed, no such survivors exist. Transition is this process of oppositional struggle itself. The past shapes the future through the present precisely in this negative way. The future is not the negation of any past, but of a particular past. It is nonetheless a break, an irreversible break with that past."*

Lenin devotes the first half of "On the Question of Dialectics" to precisely this question of the unity and conflict of opposites.

*"The unity (coincidence, identity, equal action) of opposites is conditional, temporary, transitory, relative. The struggle of mutually exclusive opposites is absolute, just as development and motion are absolute."*

*"NB: The distinction between subjectivism (skepticism, sophistry, etc.) and dialectics, incidentally, is that in (objective) dialectics the difference between the relative and the absolute is itself relative. For objective dialectics there is an absolute **within** the relative. For*

*subjectivism and sophistry the relative is only relative and excludes the absolute."*

Wohlforth leaves out the question of the absolute within the relative. As Lenin explains, the difference between subjectivism and dialectics is that for dialectics the difference between the relative and the absolute is itself relative. For Wohlforth, however, this difference is absolute. He does not see the absolute within the relative, the conflict within the unity, but instead the conflict counterposed to the unity. Struggle is absolute just as development and motion are absolute, but dialectics does not consist in simply repeating this phrase.

In *In Defence of Trotskyism*, the statement of the International Committee of the Fourth International issued two years ago against the the joint attack on dialectical materialism by the American SWP and the French OCI revisionists, this is fully explained:

*"The relation between theory and practice, between party and class is a relation of struggle. The relative unity of theory and practice is established, constantly reestablished, only through this struggle of mutually exclusive opposites.*

*"The struggle between Marxist theory and the spontaneous consciousness generated in bourgeois society is the basis of the unity established in the revolutionary party for its practice. This struggle is continuous and permanent until such time as the revolution abolishes capitalism, and with it, the proletariat itself . . .*

*"The revisionists who seek to wipe out the conflict of opposites in dialectics, to justify wiping out the conflict of theory and practice, regard unity and conflict of opposites 'as some sort of equally coexisting aspects to be contemplated.' For these people, sometimes, there is conflict, sometimes there is unity. But it is not the continuous conflict of opposites which is the essence of the unity.*

*" . . . It is only in the conflict that the unity exists at all and is constantly recreated in revolutionary practice."*

From an apparently opposite standpoint, but with an equally idealist method, Wohlforth holds the conflict and unity of opposites apart. He sees the conflict not as the essence of, but op-

posed to, the unity. His counterposing the conflict of opposites against the transition makes this absolutely clear. He writes:

*"Opposites are held fast precisely through bringing them together. That is why opposites are held fast only through struggle and in no other way. Any attempt to avoid struggle creates the conditions for the breaking up of the opposites. This is because the struggle of opposites proceeds in any event. If it is not approached consciously and fought out by comrades who fight as an opposite against another opposite then the opposites fall away and no knowledge is learned from this conflict."*

What is striking about this passage is that Wohlforth has nothing to say about how the struggle of opposites proceeds. It is not enough just to say that there are opposites in struggle and that this struggle must be consciously grasped. What is involved here is sophistic distortion of dialectics, an attempt to transform dialectics into subjectivism and sophistry. It is the Achilles heel of **idealism**. Once "conflict of opposites" is counterposed **absolutely** to the unity of opposites, the basis of the movement of ideas in universal matter in motion is lost.

The process of holding fast the opposites is a question of practice, not a mental phenomenon. The opposites we are talking about are opposites in the material world. In the case of opposites in the party, we deal with the contradictory pressures and developments within the working class itself as they are reflected in the theory and practice of its vanguard. The party leadership must see the contradictions and difficulties within the party, the idealist tendencies, etc., as a source of knowledge from which we learn in a distilled form the development and movement of the working class and the pressures upon the working class from other classes. This is what Trotsky had in mind when he said that, "The party is the laboratory of the working class."

Wohlforth reveals the philosophical break from Marxism that was behind his attempt to liquidate the party. Wohlforth sees the struggle of opposites as an idealist, as a matter to be resolved in the head, not in our practice in the material world. This is why he makes no attempt to assess the objective

development of the economic crisis in his document and fail to probe **how** opposites come into conflict and are transformed. This idealist break with Marxism is the source of his attack on transition. He writes:

*"His (Comrade Healy's) main emphasis was on transition. But a transition cannot be understood when abstracted from what happened before (the affirmative or first moment of the dialectic) and what will come after it (the negation of the negation which, in turn, is a first moment in the next dialectical change). It is as absurd to do this as it is to assess the miners' strike isolated from the Miller-Boyle fight which preceded it. The interpenetration of opposites is precisely that and it cannot be understood abstracted from the whole process."*

First of all, **who** is abstracting transition from the whole process? As we have shown in relation to the Miller-Boyle fight, it was Wohlforth who chose to abstract out the previous intervention of the International Committee against a tendency to adapt to Miller from the discussion about the current perspective in the miners' union. Comrade Healy in his discussion did not abstract the moment of transition from the other moments of the dialectic. Nor did he present transition in the centrist manner of Novack as a matter of "fixed entities which survive the process of contradiction" as Wohlforth lyingly asserts.

Let us clear away these smokescreens and ask Wohlforth, is the study of dialectics, in all its different moments, vital to the building of a revolutionary party, or not? Furthermore, is there or is there not a moment of transition in the dialectical process, which while not abstracted and isolated from the other moments must still be understood in its distinctness: Does not "transition" represent the unity and interconnectedness of all forms of matter and motion?

Clearly, Wohlforth's answer to these questions is "no." He says further on of Comrade Healy's discussion on dialectics that, "He sought to break down the moments of the dialectic in the most minute way, showing the opposites within each opposite at each moment in the dialectical process. This kind of

ecture has, in my opinion, very little use, because it abstracts out of an actual study of matter in motion a discussion of logic in such a manner as to encourage a very pedantic and formal approach."

Wohlforth seeks to replace a study of "the moments of the dialectic in the most minute way" with a repetition of the formal "conflict of opposites." In a similar way, the OCI as well as Novack proceeded to deny the need to study dialectics (in order to root practice in the theory of knowledge of Marxism) by replacing the formal "unity of opposites," with which they sought to deny the conflict between theory and practice as the essence of the theory of knowledge. This became a rationale for the revisionist practice of separating theory from practice through an opportunist adaptation to the spontaneity of the working class.

Wohlforth's "conflict of opposites" is just a different form of this attack on the theory of knowledge of Marxism, used by him to attack the objective, materialist basis of dialectics, which demands that attention be given to all "the moments of the dialectic in the most minute way." This study of dialectics, far from being formal and pedantic, is the study of what Trotsky called "the algebra of revolution." Wohlforth's objection that such a discussion is useless because it "abstracts out of an actual discussion of matter in motion a discussion of logic in such a manner (?) as to encourage a very pedantic and formal approach," is so much dust thrown at his readers in order to cover his tracks. We can only study logic in a materialist way because the laws of logic, or the moments of the dialectic, have been abstracted out of the movement of matter encountered millions of times in the course of man's social practice.

This abstract understanding, which is characteristic of all science and philosophy must, of course, be continually brought into conflict with the concrete developments in the material world we encounter. But the development of scientific knowledge is impossible without such "abstractions." Wohlforth's objections amount to nothing more than a vulgar appeal to all the reactionary, anti-theoretical traditions of

American pragmatism. In this way, Wohlforth seeks to make his peace with the SWP revisionists Hansen and Novack, who have for years attacked the International Committee for its emphasis on "abstract" theory and its "ultimatistic" and "sectarian" practice.

It is of great significance that Wohlforth lays special emphasis on denying transitions. His pragmatic, subjective conception of the conflict of opposites leads him to liquidate the moment of transition (as well as other moments of the dialectic) into the "conflict of opposites." But the conflict of opposites, which is continuous and absolute in relation to a transitory unity of opposites, must pass through the moments of the interpenetration of opposites, their transition, and their transformation. When Wohlforth identifies the interpenetration of opposites ("the interpenetration of opposites is precisely that," i.e., the whole dialectical process) with everything else, he thereby liquidates it.

Wohlforth's attack on transition is bound up with his refusal to grapple with change, how it takes place, and how we prepare the party for the changes now developing in the revolutionary struggles of the working class. Wohlforth denies transition precisely because he sees all opposites as fixed, and thinks he can impose the opposites he subjectively chooses on the objective movement of matter. On this basis, he is unable to see the movement of matter which continuously passes through moments of transitions whereby opposites are changing.

For a revolutionist, the importance of transitions should be evident. Trotsky stressed over and over again in his *History of the Russian Revolution* that Lenin prepared the Bolshevik Party for the October Revolution only by giving the closest, most minute attention to the rapid transitions in the relationships of classes as they were reflected in the relative strengths of parties, in the activity of the masses, and in the changing struggles within the Bolshevik Party itself. This sensitivity to transitions could only be developed through the practice of building the party and its intervention in the life of the masses. This practice served as the starting point, being continuously

ought into conflict with previously developed theory, for the development of knowledge. This is why Lenin, contrary to Wohlforth, places such emphasis on transitions in his *Philosophical Notebooks*. He writes for instance:

*"1) Ordinary imagination grasps difference and contradiction, but not the transition from the one to the other, this however is the most important."*

### WOHLFORTH REWRITES HISTORY

The entire second half of Wohlforth's statement is devoted to an attempt to justify his own desertion of the revolutionary party.

As with all revisionism, there is a dialectic in its own development. Wohlforth's subjective idealism led him into sharp collision with the international movement and his own party, from there towards the political positions of the revisionists, and now drives him into a position of vicious hatred and slander of the International Committee.

In all of this, he is continuing on the path taken before him by similar middle class individualists who have begun from their own personal prestige and position, rather than from the requirements of the class struggle and the international movement.

Wohlforth claims that the leadership of the Workers League was changed on the basis of false and slanderous charges. He admits to serious political difference between himself and the comrades of the IC and the Workers Revolutionary Party, with whom he had collaborated for years. But his conclusions are reduced to matters of gossip and maneuver. All he can say is that the leadership of the IC from 1973 onwards became "increasingly erratic." He never tries to prove where this alleged instability comes from.

The truth is that Wohlforth, after developing the most profound differences with the IC, the history of which he either distorts or passes over in his document, ran away from a political and theoretical struggle in the party. He sought refuge behind a hysterical campaign against the "regime" of the

Fourth International, just as the petty bourgeois opposition of Burnham and Shachtman did inside the Socialist Workers Party in 1940.

Wohlforth's attempts to rewrite the history of the party suit his own subjective purposes must be answered.

It is not surprising that he devotes only three paragraphs of his statement to the first seven years of the Workers League and its predecessor, the American Committee for the Fourth International. Like other petty bourgeois, he turns against the tradition of his own organization. He has nothing but contempt for this history, because he sees only the break with the past and not the continuity. Just as his philosophical position is a idealist "conflict of opposites" which keeps theory and practice and party and class separate, he divorces the past and present of the party, instead of beginning from their unity through conflict.

Wohlforth now turns his back on the principles for which the Workers League fought for so many years: internationalism, Bolshevik centralism, and the defense of our movement against the attacks of the enraged middle class idealists like Robertson. It is only natural under these circumstances that he has little to say about these struggles.

The Workers League came out of the struggle internationally against Pabloite revisionism. The differences with the SWP leadership were probed to their theoretical level, and the SWP was forced to explain and defend its philosophical position in the course of its break with the IC in 1961-1963. In 1964, the SWP suspended and then expelled the tendency which was to form the Workers League, when it demanded that an urgent discussion be conducted, inside the party, on the historic betrayal of the SWP's co-thinkers in Ceylon, the LSSP, which had just entered a capitalist coalition government.

Before the break with the SWP, however, a sharp fight within our own minority had been necessary, a fight leading to the break with the Robertsonites, who were later to form the Spartacist League, notorious for its obsessive hatred for the International Committee.

Robertson's position in 1962 was quite similar in many respects to Wohlforth's today. He struck an intransigent pose, and made great haste to identify the opposites. He insisted on characterizing the SWP, which had yet to reunify with the Pabloite revisionists, as a right-centrist party, and he urged a course of irresponsible factionalism and split upon the minority. Robertson sought to break free of the SWP for his own reactionary reasons.

We explained at that time that if he could not conduct a patient struggle within his own party, he could certainly not be expected to conduct any such struggle within the working class itself. He maintained a position of complete individualism, arrogant contempt for the discipline of the SWP, and the political authority of the IC. When he refused to subordinate himself politically to the decisions and recommendations of the IC in 1962, he split from our movement.

The definitive break with Robertson came in 1966, at the Third Congress of the IC. Robertson and his Spartacist group were invited to this congress as observers, along with the American Committee for the Fourth International, led by Wohlforth. The IC began with the method of holding fast the opposites as a reflection of the class struggle, and not with the subjective method of abstract judgments or impressions based upon past mistakes. It did not simply identify and describe the opposites as fixed, but instead sought to create the conditions for their possible transformation and in any event the necessary theoretical clarification of the movement.

Of course, the past struggles were extremely important, but Robertson still maintained that he was in agreement with the IC. By this time, of course, both his group and the American Committee were outside the SWP. It was necessary to test out in struggle over perspectives and principles just exactly whether either or both of these groups coming from a similar background of formal and idealist opposition to the revisionists, were prepared to fight for the actual construction of the revolutionary party.

Wohlforth at first opposed this attempt to reunify with

Robertson. His position, which he stated in October 1965, was that Robertson "will never be a Marxist." Instead of beginning with objective consideration of the need for political and theoretical clarification before the international movement, Wohlforth began with national and individual considerations, with his impressions and his personal judgment of Robertson, with whether he felt he could work with Robertson in a common organization.

The fundamental break with Robertson is documented in *What is Spartacist?* This was one of the most important steps in the training of a cadre in our party, in a ruthless struggle against the consummate expression of the sickness of the petty bourgeois radical circle.

Wohlforth's method in this struggle had been dangerously wrong. He refused to hold fast the opposites. He began with subjective impressions, with personal expediency. Only through the fight against Wohlforth's subjective approach was it possible to expose Robertson and to educate the entire movement in the process. Before this struggle took place, Wohlforth could only see it as a question of maneuvers. Robertson always saw this fight as a gigantic trick, a conspiracy to destroy him. Wohlforth now proceeds with exactly that method in his attacks on the IC.

The *Bulletin* was launched as a printed paper and made its first attempts to reach out to sections of workers in the summer and fall of 1966. During the same period, the founding conference of the Workers League was held. This was, of course, a direct product of the struggle against the extreme propagandism and hostility to theory and discipline of the Robertson group. Wohlforth made very important contributions to this development, in carrying out decisions after having resisted the struggle through which these decisions were arrived at.

For the next several years, the Workers League laid the theoretical and political basis for the next big quantitative and qualitative leaps in the development of the party. We turned to the theoretical questions, especially to a study of Marxist philosophy and of the economic crisis. This enabled the League

to understand the important events which began with the breakup of the long post-war boom, including the devaluation of the British pound and the dollar crisis, the enormous political crisis deepened by the reverses suffered by the imperialists in Vietnam, Johnson's virtual forced resignation in his refusal to run for a second presidential term, the French General Strike of 1968, and the invasion of Czechoslovakia. The Workers League carried out important work against the revisionists and the Stalinists during this period, and fought inside the antiwar protest movement for revolutionary policies, for a turn to the working class and to a Marxist understanding of the crisis. All this made possible the tremendous expansion of the party and the press, which in turn created the conditions of further development of work in the trade unions and among the youth.

Wohlforth tears the development of the youth movement out of its historic context to suggest it was the only event of any importance in the history of our party. Of course, what made the youth movement possible in 1971 was not only the objective developments but also the political preparations undertaken by the party in the preceding period, the international struggle against revisionism.

The launching of the Young Socialists by the Workers League first in New York in December of 1971 and later nationally with the *Young Socialist* newspaper and the first Annual Conference of the YS in 1973, was undoubtedly the major turning point in the development of the revolutionary party in the US. At this point, Wohlforth's subjective method leads him into the most fantastic distortions of our history.

He claims that soon after this point the intervention of the comrades of the Socialist Labour League, now the Workers Revolutionary Party, became "increasingly erratic." His position also is that within the Workers League, the resistance to the new requirements of the objective situation, instead of being expressed both through propagandism and activism as we have explained, was almost entirely the propagandism of the older cadres. He sees this propagandism as being negated spon-

taneously by the youth, led by Wohlforth.

At this point, Wohlforth's statement becomes a mass of gossip, psychological speculation, and vicious slanders. It was Wohlforth who from this point, as the movement began to turn outward to the working class and the youth, became more and more unstable.

As Wohlforth knows very well, the International Committee waged a long and patient struggle against the domination of pragmatism within the Workers League, for which Wohlforth, as national secretary, had to take primary responsibility. This struggle is well-documented and exposes the complete falsehood of this claim that "The intervention of the SLL-WRP leadership in the Workers League has had an increasingly erratic character to it, particularly since the beginning of 1973."

In fact, the differences which emerged in 1973 were not new; rather, they had grown more serious under conditions of the rapidly deepening world crisis which required the sharpest struggle against pragmatism in the Workers League in order to root the party in the working class.

Wohlforth cannot bury the history of this struggle. In 1970, when he still defended the principles of the IC and sought to build a Marxist party in the United States, Wohlforth correctly exposed the political bankruptcy and degeneracy of the Robertsonites who for a long time have employed precisely these subjective methods.

*"Everything is reduced to subjective idealist judgments on the capacity or incapacity of individuals. Oh, how the middle class individualist seeks to bring everyone else down to his own level of thinking. Great historical events become reduced to personal characteristics just as they themselves decide their own political course on the basis of personal prestige and subjective feelings."*

Despite the objective difficulties created by the Voorhis Act, the IC has fought for the development of a sympathizing section in the United States through an implacable struggle against idealism and revisionism. All the gains made by the Workers League after 1966 have come out of this struggle.

The comrades of the SLL, forerunner of the WRP, con-

tinuously warned the Workers League that idealism took its clearest form in our movement in the tendency to adapt to the decisions of the IC and in particular simply to emulate the forms and activities of the British section without grasping their essence. Such a method can of course give the illusion of success ("correctness") when the crisis is providing a stream of new forces who provide resources for the movement.

Wohlforth substituted this surface copying for the development of Marxism and the training of cadres through the conflict of theory and practice in the Workers League. Starting from its practice in the class struggle, which is posited on its program and abstract theory, the party draws from this conflict of opposites new knowledge of the material development of the class struggle, which is then tested in practice.

Without the conscious application of this method, agreement on program becomes a temporary cover for its abandonment, and capitulation to revisionism via pragmatism. For years, the SWP maintained formal agreement with the IC, while abandoning any struggle for Marxism and thus opening the door for reunification with the Pabloites on the pretext of "new world realities" which were really a hodge-podge of empirical impressions of the strength of Stalinism.

The OCI pursued this same path, counterposing the program to the Marxist theory of knowledge. This led eventually to the split in 1971 with the International Committee and a rejection of the *Transitional Program* itself. Wohlforth has followed this ignominious route.

Wohlforth's centrism and solidarity with the revisionists is expressed most clearly in this hatred of the fundamental principles of the Fourth International. He openly breaks with the conception of an international as developed by Lenin and Trotsky after 1917.

All his lies and distortions about the "interventions" of the IC in the Workers League are employed to attempt to show that the International Committee should have no political authority. Wohlforth does not want an international movement which trains the cadre in all countries through the unity and conflict

of opposites, based on the objective material development of the class struggle internationally. Like the OCI in France, Wohlforth wanted only to use the reputation of the International Committee for his own purposes within the United States.

In his attempt to slander the IC, Wohlforth resorts to the very same anticommunist and nationalist diatribes that have been used by the enemies of Bolshevism for more than a half century. The Third International was denounced by its enemies as the tool of the Russians under the personal dictatorship of Lenin. Today, Wohlforth, who has written hundreds of pages defending the International Committee, declares that the IC is the tool of the SLL-WRP beneath the dictatorship of G. Healy.

Wohlforth's conception of internationalism is akin to that of Cannon, who always argued that the antidote to Stalin's strangling of the Comintern was an international with little or no authority.

Still, Cannon's account of the international leadership of Lenin and Trotsky is in marked contrast to what Wohlforth holds up as correct leadership.

Cannon wrote that the factions in dispute in the American party back in 1922, on the question of legal versus underground existence, presented their views to Trotsky. For Wohlforth's benefit, it should be noted that Trotsky was not the leader of the Comintern, but was a leader of the Soviet party and the Soviet state. When Trotsky heard the views of the Americans, including Cannon, who argued for a legal existence for the American party, he immediately agreed with them, and said he would speak with Lenin. He told his listeners that Lenin and "all the Russians" would agree with them.

Now, Wohlforth tries to use the pathetic Menshevik argument about various elected officials in the IC in order to avoid answering the political questions in dispute. His wretched argument amounts to the statement that he is free to put forward his views but the leaders and founders of the IC are not free to present theirs!

As Trotsky once wrote in relation to the petty bourgeois

Burnham, the one-thousand-and-first attack on Marxism and its principles is no better than the previous thousand. Wohlforth attacks the WRP because its development represents the highest stage in the struggle of the Fourth International in defense of Trotskyism. The authority of the WRP in the IC is based on the history of this struggle. For the same reactionary reasons, Wohlforth slanders Comrade G. Healy, the acknowledged leader of the WRP whose struggle against Stalinism and revisionism spans four decades.

Flowing from this, Wohlforth now defends the OCI and echoes its distortions of the history of the IC. He chooses to call the relations between the SLL and the OCI a "collaboration" between two sections. He denies entirely the conflict of opposites within the international movement. Wohlforth, like the OCI, sees the international as an amalgamation of different sections.

The OCI continuously posed the establishment of artificial "centers" and organizational shortcuts in opposition to the training of a cadre. Behind the OCI's talk of building "the international as such" was its aim to adapt to and fuse with centrist forces.

It is of the greatest significance that Wohlforth now criticizes the 1972 World Congress — which focused on the lessons of the split with the OCI and which established the foundations for a powerful development of the IC — as "not a very formal affair..." He lines up with the OCI by declaring that, "the conference did not, however, establish a secretariat or in any other manner clarify its structure and rules."

Wohlforth admits here for the first time his total opposition to the proceedings of the 1972 Congress. This completely shatters his attempt to present his collision with the IC as something manufactured by the SLL-WRP. Wohlforth's private opposition to the 1972 Congress and the split with the OCI was then carried forward in his actual leadership of the Workers League.

It is necessary to examine the historic importance of the 1972 Congress. It was held after the collapse of the Bretton

Woods monetary arrangements upon which the postwar boom had been based. The ending of the convertibility of the dollar into gold on August 15, 1971 and the subsequent devaluation of the dollar set the stage for the breakdown of the world credit system, the unleashing of uncontrolled inflation, and the international slump in industrial production.

Only the IC had prepared for this development of the crisis. The revisionists, basing themselves on Mandel's impressionist theories of "neo-capitalism," were thrown into the deepest crisis. The fraudulent United Secretariat of the Pabloites was held together only through maneuvers, deceit and a complete disregard for principles.

The IC conference evaluated the economic crisis and the catastrophe that would be unleashed by the 1971 decisions of Nixon and the American bourgeoisie. It was stated that this crisis would transform class relations internationally and prepare the objective conditions for the social revolution. History has vindicated these perspectives.

The split with the OCI was understood as an expression of the new world situation and seen as vital for the fulfillment of the responsibility of the IC to train a cadre to lead the working class internationally. The conference agreed that the IC had been **strengthened** by the split, having forced the issues of the Marxist theory of knowledge to the center of the struggle. This split posed new tasks to the IC. During the course of the conference, the problems of the individual sections were studied in detail.

The conference made clear that the split with the OCI was decisive and that the IC would never tolerate an attempt by any section to emulate the OCI by verbally adapting to the IC while proceeding against its perspectives. The length of the struggle with the OCI was dictated by the objective development of the crisis and the dialectical "holding fast" of the opposites within the IC. Only in this way could knowledge be drawn in the struggle. But learning from this struggle meant understanding that the IC had defeated OCI centrism and would split with those who defended it.

It was in this context that the Workers League was criticized very sharply. The tendency to adapt to the SLL had covered up the refusal of the Workers League to really understand and prepare for the deepening crisis. This turning away from the international crisis led to an abandonment of the IC perspectives. This was revealed most clearly in the fact that the Workers League virtually dropped the fight for the labor party in the critical first months of 1972. This was a turn away from the working class and the very perspectives upon which the Workers League had been built.

The IC warned the Workers League that it could not continue to adapt to the international movement. It had to learn from the IC by conducting a struggle against pragmatism within its ranks. Wohlforth opposed the 1972 Congress because he agreed with the OCI's conception of a centrist international. He lashes out bitterly against all the gains made by the IC since the split with the OCI. He attempts to write off the development of important sections that were able to emerge because of the struggle against the OCI. He writes:

*"The only section of the IC outside the WRP capable of any independent life and development was the Workers League. This was so because the League had a long history and had built the important beginnings of a movement. It had battled under the most adverse conditions against the revisionists and its leadership had done a considerable amount of writing and theoretical work in their own right. Thus, conflict with the WL became a central feature to the development of the IC and the future of the IC itself would be tested in that conflict."*

Here we have all the nationalist arrogance of the petty bourgeois American philistine. Every internationalist can only have a feeling of disgust as he reads Wohlforth's boastful references to the "only section of the IC outside the WRP . . . was the Workers League."

The IC has trained and built sections in countries where the cadre defend Trotskyism and fight revisionism, under the most difficult conditions in Peru, Spain, Germany, Australia, Por-

tugal, Ireland, Greece, and Ceylon. Wohlforth sneers at these extremely important achievements.

Wohlforth was opposed to the growth of the IC because it threatened his hopes of existing (as a sympathizing section) within the International Committee as the OCI had attempted. When Wohlforth speaks of the conflict with the Workers League being a "central feature" from 1972 on, he is stating that the IC should have reconciled itself to the Workers League being some sort of fixed opposite. In short, he wanted to do his own thing in the United States and to hell with the IC, while misusing its political authority.

In revealing today his agreement with the OCI, Wohlforth lays bare his own deceit, duplicity, and refusal to learn anything from the advice and criticism of the IC over a long period. He deliberately evades any serious evaluation of this struggle. Instead, he sees its development as a product of "madness." Such an explanation could be given only by a subjective idealist thoroughly disoriented by the development of the crisis. Wohlforth has managed only to besmirch himself with the mud he slings so freely.

But we have no intention of allowing the record of the struggle against Wohlforth's pragmatism to be buried.

Three years of correspondence between Wohlforth and leading comrades in the SLL-WRP show that every effort was made to bring about a change. In 1939, Shachtman claimed that Trotsky had discovered a petty bourgeois opposition in the SWP out of the blue. This was answered with extracts from the Trotsky-Shachtman correspondence. The correspondence we now reproduce is a crushing refutation of Wohlforth's contemptible lies. The history from 1972 on is one of increasingly sharp clashes with Wohlforth.

Following the founding of the Young Socialists in December 1971, differences developed between the Workers League and the IC. Upon making this critical turn to the youth, the Workers League dropped systematic political work in the trade unions around the fight for a labor party.

At the same time, having drawn a layer of working class

youth into the Workers League through the struggle to establish the YS, Wohlforth became impatient with the development of the older comrades. He believed that the recruitment of new forces made the older forces unnecessary. He did not see the work in the trade unions as "fruitful" and the youth work took on a marked pragmatic character. What he did not see was that the cadre are trained through a struggle of opposites within the party.

On Wohlforth's initiative, leading members of the Central Committee were removed at the conclusion of the national conference in 1972 and simply replaced with younger comrades. This decision was rectified only after receiving advice from England which pointed out that the attempt to remove opposites in the party by such administrative measures would prevent the political training of the younger cadre from taking place.

The letter pointed out:

*"The struggle against idealism has to be a continuous process in the party, not a sporadic outburst when things begin to explode in front of you . . . This is not a struggle that can be dealt with or solved through organizational or disciplinary measures, but it must become the very lifeblood of the movement. What the revisionists and the OCI all run away from is this contradictory struggle for theory . . . If you eliminate the opposites within these committees before a struggle takes place, you in fact are leaving the PC and NC be."*

In conclusion, the SLL comrades advised:

*"It is dangerous to see only the form of the achievements of the SLL without understanding the content of the political struggle behind them. It is precisely the hard, many times frustrating points of struggle which have been the motive force for the deepest developments and leaps forward."*

Despite this letter, Wohlforth's method of copying the forms of the SLL rather than learning from the international movement and developing revolutionary practice on this basis persisted. This manifested itself almost immediately when the

*Bulletin* carried nothing but the most perfunctory remarks about the historic "Right to Work" marches launched by the SLL in February, 1972. In carrying forward the political struggle against the Tory government fighting every step of the way against the sabotage of the Labor Party reformists and Stalinists, the marches represented the high point in the practice of the Trotskyist movement. These marches, which culminated in an 8,000-strong rally in London, were a source of knowledge for the entire international movement. For the British comrades, it was a decisive step forward in training the leadership for the transformation of the SLL into the WRP, which was accomplished in November, 1973.

Wohlforth ignored these marches in the party press and then sought to copy the British by organizing a demonstration demanding jobs. This jobs demonstration turned out to be the opposite of the "Right to Work" marches, as the most fundamental political issues were dropped from the campaign.

These developments were the immediate background to the sharp struggle at the 1972 IC Congress. While, as we have pointed out, Wohlforth now declares his opposition to the decisions of the conference, he then stated his agreement. On the advice of the IC, the Workers League resumed the campaign for the labor party and prepared for a conference of trade unionists. On the basis of this turn, the Workers League was able to begin the development of forces in the industrial unions and hold extremely successful conferences which led to the founding of the Trade Union Alliance for a Labor Party.

Wohlforth does not even mention this. But it was only through this conflict that the party was united in a turn to the unions as well as the youth in the second half of 1972. Wohlforth makes so much noise about the conflict of opposites as more essential than their unity, but by counterposing the conflict to the transition, as we have shown, he makes this an arbitrary choice of conflict. Thus, he chooses to ignore this decisive conflict in the history of the Workers League.

It is now clear that he refused to learn from this conflict when it took place. He proceeded with the conception that a

youth movement must be built separately from the work in the rest of the working class, even as important developments took place in both areas. The record shows that Wohlforth maintained one position in public, but ignored it in practice. As Comrade Gerry Healy of the WRP remarked in a letter to Wohlforth later in 1973, this is "the essence of the separation of theory from practice." The danger of pragmatism became more acute.

In December, 1972, Wohlforth wrote an obituary of Max Shachtman, one of the founders of American Trotskyism who had deserted the Socialist Workers Party in 1940 and who had ended his life as an anticommunist and agent of imperialism. A critical passage in the obituary stated that Shachtman's deterioration "not only 'detracts' from his earlier contributions, but completely negates them . . . Shachtman died a traitor to his class and a counterrevolutionary. That is the long and short of it."

This article occasioned a six-page letter from Comrade Healy, on behalf of the IC, which raised critically important issues on the question of the Marxist method. Wohlforth chooses to say nothing of this letter, although he finds the space to spit up countless falsehoods and innuendoes.

This letter of December 22, 1972 stated:

*"We are not in agreement with the way in which you confront the history of the movement or the manner in which you approach and defend the materialist dialectic. We consider this pragmatic.*

*"We could never permit questions which concern the theoretical bases of our movement to pass unobserved, more so today, in the deepest crisis of the capitalist system, where the decisive task is the training of revolutionary cadres on the principles and method of Marxism. That is why we cannot help but oppose the manner in which you confront this question."*

Healy criticized the refusal of Wohlforth to see the contradictory development of Shachtman. Behind the ludicrous attempt to state that the crimes of Shachtman after 1940 detracted from the material contributions he made in the 1930s in the building of the SWP and the International Left Opposition is a

refusal to grapple with contradiction and transition.

The letter explained that Trotsky, in assembling the cadres of the Fourth International, had to hold fast the opposites represented by different forces:

*"For these reasons we cannot understand the attitude of cavalier indifference to the contribution of Shachtman to the development of a Trotskyist movement in the early 1930s. Trotsky while critical of his theoretical inconsistency nevertheless valued his journalistic skill and made every possible attempt to try and integrate Shachtman more fully into the party."*

In response to Wohlforth's assertion that revolutionists "start at all times from the working class, its problems, its situation and its development," Healy wrote:

*"It is not us who start 'from the working class,' its 'problems,' its 'situations' and its 'development.' We always set out from the absolute and fundamental contradiction within the capitalist system: the class struggle."*

In approaching Shachtman from the standpoint of idealism, Wohlforth revealed that he had failed to grasp the essence of Trotsky's estimation of Shachtman's degeneration: that this was the product of the latter's refusal to seriously take up a fight for dialectical materialism against pragmatism.

The Shachtman obituary exposed the persistence of pragmatism in the Workers League, which was the fundamental problem in the party's development. Healy concluded:

*"All the above observations are not concerned with deficiencies of an article, but with real problems of our movement — and not only in America.*

*"Is the absence of documents concerning the perspectives of the class struggle from the 'Bulletin' perhaps not related to these problems? The character of our work is reflected in our press, and we would like to see our work transformed, based theoretically and practically on the class struggle."*

Next in the documentary record of the struggle comes the letter to the Workers League from Comrade Mike Banda of the WRP. Wohlforth distorts this letter without quoting from its

contents. He constructs a myth about allegedly contradictory political positions and advice coming from Cde. Healy and Cde. Banda.

Comrade Healy urged the Workers League at its Central Committee meeting at the end of 1972 to begin with the understanding that the US was at the center of the world crisis. The period we faced was one of huge shocks, not just in Europe but the US as well. The struggle for a labor party would have an explosive and a telescoped character in this country, and there was no objective basis for a long period of reformist development as there had been earlier in Britain.

This did not mean that the struggle for a labor party could be jumped over, that it was synonymous with the revolutionary party, or that painstaking work in the trade unions was unnecessary. There would have to be a transition between bourgeois and socialist consciousness within the working class. How long this stage would last depended in large part on the development of the revolutionary party itself.

As we know, Wohlforth was impatient with transitions, with the actual struggle to change the party and its relationship to the working class. He saw development only as the conflict of opposites, not concerning himself with their interpenetration and transition which required the closest study as part of the workers' movement. He distorted and reinterpreted Comrade Healy's advice to suit his own idealist conceptions.

Comrade Banda wrote his letter several months after this Central Committee meeting. In his letter, he makes an objective contribution to the perspectives discussion, explaining the roots of the tremendous crisis then developing worldwide, and showing how unlike in the 1920s, US imperialism today had to do much more than place Europe and Japan on rations. In order to survive and at no matter what cost, it had to seek to destroy its capitalist rivals. US imperialism remained powerful enough in relation to its rivals not to resolve its crisis, but to postpone it for a very brief period of time while unloading the full force of it onto Europe. For this reason in particular, Banda warned:

*"To conceive of developments in the US as proceeding only by 'leaps' is wrong and dangerously so. There will not only be 'leaps' but also plenty of hard, unspectacular slogging against the Stalinists and revisionists which will require great theoretical firmness and tactical skill . . ."*

The analysis made by Banda has been completely confirmed by the events of the past two years. The tremendous struggles unleashed in Greece, Portugal, Italy and Britain, and now the tremendous shocks facing the American working class, all come as a consequence of the measures taken by the imperialists to postpone the collapse for a period of months or years, and not decades.

The difference Wohlforth claims to see between the advice of Cdes. Healy and Banda simply reflects his own extreme disorientation. This instability was expressed particularly in impatient attempts to jump over the necessary stages of development. He refused to understand the real significance of the August, 1971 measures. His method is a caricature of Marxism, like the Stalinist canard that the Trotskyist theory of the permanent revolution means a skipping over of the tasks of the democratic revolution, whereas it explains instead that these vital tasks in the colonial and semicolonial countries can only be accomplished under proletarian leadership.

Wohlforth never probed the theoretical differences over perspectives. On the contrary he attempted to blur them over by adapting in words to the criticisms raised while pursuing his own course.

The differences were related very much to the questions of the "leaps" raised in the correspondence. Wohlforth was hostile to the dialectic, and to the advice about the necessary work in the trade unions and against Stalinism and revisionism. He was looking for a short cut, counterposing the "conflict" to the "transition" and looking for immediate results. His approach was similar to that of James P. Cannon in the "American Theses," which he wrote in 1946. Cannon then saw tremendous revolutionary developments in the US taking place completely abstracted from developments in Europe and internationally.

He also saw the SWP becoming a "small mass party" divorced from the struggle to break the working class from the stranglehold of the Stalinists and the trade union bureaucracy. This false perspective led Cannon to drop the fight for the labor party. Cannon counterposed the leaps in development to the necessary period of transition in which the revolutionary party had to be constructed. In practice, this "ultra-revolutionary" perspective always leads to the abandonment of the struggle to train a cadre and a turn away from the fight to construct the Fourth International as a world movement.

In this way, the SWP in the postwar period planted the seeds for the subsequent emergence of open liquidationism and capitulation to bureaucracy in its ranks.

Wohlforth's perspective in the 1973-74 period was, as we have shown, strikingly similar to Cannon's in 1946. This period was immediately preceded by the installation of our own press and the preparation and launching of the *Twice Weekly Bulletin*. The British comrades gave us the benefit of their own experience. These leaders, whom Wohlforth now describes as "erratic," consistently urged that all these steps be carefully prepared. In both the technical and organizational and political spheres, the "leaps" had to be prepared and the necessary hard work not overlooked in the haste to achieve dramatic results.

Wohlforth's pragmatic method came into sharp collision with the actual development of the economic crisis and political developments in the United States and internationally. It was fought against politically by the International Committee.

Wohlforth's reaction to this struggle was to become completely subjective and to break politically from the International Committee, desert the Workers League and develop an openly liquidationist perspective. Whereas it took Cannon almost 15 years to pass through this evolution, Wohlforth accomplished it in a much shorter period of time. He expresses the vacillation characteristic of petty-bourgeois radicalism.

He has now jumped over to the position he falsely ascribed to Comrade Banda. It is Wohlforth who has now impressionistically decided that since the trade unions are "not

political," the fight for a labor party will take another path — that the American working class is not revolutionary material.

The fundamental disagreements on theory and practice, the method of holding fast the opposites, the training of cadres in the trade unions and among the youth, next exploded over a series of debates held between the Workers League and the Spartacist League in the spring of 1973.

Wohlforth tries to suggest that these were only a "hesitation over a full turn into the working class." Once again we see his method of the subjective choosing of the opposites at work. According to Wohlforth, he was surrounded by an international leadership which had mysteriously become erratic, by a leadership which he himself had helped to train in the United States which was hopelessly conservative and propagandistic.

Yet his own decision to turn the movement away from the working class and the youth and back towards debates and discussions with the sickest middle class circles was not only a "hesitation."

The comrades of the International Committee correctly saw this as much more. Wohlforth saw the movement being trained in an idealist manner, in a debate with the revisionists, rather than through the sharpest struggle in the party coming out of its fight to penetrate the working class. This was not just a hesitation but a sharp turn away from the working class.

This was also reflected in the report on these debates in the *Bulletin*. The history of the Fourth International was portrayed as the product of personal judgments and motives, much as Wohlforth was now proceeding in his own work. He suggested that the OCI had remained inside the IC until 1971 because of "concessions" which were made to them. He did not examine this question from the standpoint of class forces or the development of the crisis.

Comrade Healy wrote two letters on these subjects at that time. On June 4, 1973, he wrote to Wohlforth as follows:

*"The report on your lecture '20 Years of the IC,' which appeared in the 'Bulletin' May 28 raises some important questions of method*

...

*"In a lecture dealing with Philosophy it is a mistake to examine our past history from the standpoint of 'motives.' Engels in 'Feuerbach' emphasizes that although these do exist in the minds of men, and they certainly existed in ours, that in the making of history they play a secondary role . . .*

*"I faithfully reported back to the OCI all the talks we had with the SWP, warning them of the dangers ahead. For a time we enjoyed reasonably close working relations. After 1963, we continuously advised them on youth work, finances, etc. I can assure you it was done from the best possible political motives, but the result which emerged from 1966 onwards was almost the opposite of what we had worked for.*

*"Our 'motive' was based on the assumption that if they got fresh forces from the youth that this would create the material basis for change amongst the old centrist, syndicalistically-minded leaders. But it did the opposite. The period of the 'great protest' had begun and the middle class youth with some young workers flocked into the OCI. Almost immediately, they coalesced around the old leaders. From there on, opportunistically speaking, they politically not only went to hell on bicycles, they did their damndest to smash us down on the way.*

*"Once again we headed for split from the best of all 'motives' to preserve 'unity' within the IC. It can be seen from these experiences that the dialectical method of 'holding fast' the opposites is immensely superior in judging our history than the subjective idealist method of 'motives.' Within the material conditions of the class struggle the 'opposites' themselves change and it is only through analyzing the 'transition' of this change within its dialectical materialist context that we can really explain and learn from our mistakes over this period, and not I repeat from 'motives'."*

On July 9 Healy wrote to discuss the reasons for the development of these sharp differences and how they should be fought out:

*"The important thing to understand is that there can be no real struggle for dialectical materialism unless you are oriented in your practice towards the working class. The ideological preparation takes place in the struggle within the party against the idealism, especially of the middle class. Without a constant struggle on this front you cannot prepare yourself to mount the struggle against*

*idealism within the workers' movement. Unless this is done you cannot penetrate the workers' movement. It is not just a question of a decision, a turn or approach, to the working class — that is only the form. Revisionists never get beyond this form, that is why they are always talking about a working class which only exists in their heads. The content of our approach consists in our dialectical preparation of the practice through which we intervene inside the workers' movement."*

Wohlforth was urged to deepen the fight inside the party in this objective way. Instead, he subjectively set himself up as an opposite to the rest of the leadership of the Workers League. What he sought to avoid at all costs was taking responsibility himself for training comrades in the party through the penetration of a section of workers and youth. Wohlforth proceeded with subjective judgments on the worthlessness and unchangeability of various leading members of the Workers League. Behind all this was his own refusal to change, to fight for Marxism in the workers' movement.

On July 18 and 23, Cde. Healy wrote to emphasize exactly what he had stated in his earlier letters. On July 18:

*"What we need within the Workers League now is a conscious unity of the opposites, and a united examination of all the effects of revisionists on our ranks. The opposites within the League is not you versus the rest but the SLL versus all of you. We are not holding Lucy or anyone else responsible. These are normal problems which we all face.*

*"We urge the members of the leadership to avoid factionalism and subjectivism like the plague. We are now in the most vital phase of our preparation to penetrate the working class. Really great opportunities are ahead. It will be a most criminal act if these are missed.*

*"Remember there is only the IC to carry out Trotsky's and Lenin's work. We have the objective situation to do it in."*

And on July 23:

*"We are in sharp political disagreement with you on the handling of the internal situation. It is the old method of pragmatism which you brought over from the SWP which is at issue here.*

*"You must hold —, —, etc. as a unity of opposites — otherwise you cannot train a cadre. That is why we have a cadre. We hold on to them.*

*"They are not 'bastards' but comrades who have to be trained if possible through constant struggle. You can only educate a youth cadre this way."*

Wohlforth's account is a complete falsification of the struggle against his methods from beginning to end. The record of correspondence clearly proves that there was a consistent struggle against Wohlforth's pragmatic methods. Wohlforth refuses today to address himself to the political and theoretical issues which had been raised in this correspondence, instead fraudulently claiming that there was a sudden, erratic turn against him. He compounds this falsification by heaping slander on the International Committee and its leadership, portraying himself as a politically naive innocent who was "shell-shocked" because a sharp political fight was taken up against him. At the time of this struggle he ignored its content and never sought to learn from it or bring it into the Workers League.

With this method it is not surprising that Wohlforth, following the summer camp held by the Workers League in 1973, proceeded as fast as he could to break up the WL leadership, quite consciously ignoring and opposing the urgent advice of Comrade Healy.

The 1973 summer camp of the Workers League, and the Sixth National Conference which was held at the same time, expressed the continuation of Wohlforth's policy of papering over the political and theoretical differences instead of bringing them out into the open in order to clarify the whole movement. It was, however, in the period immediately following the camp that Wohlforth turned much more sharply against the perspectives of the international movement, to which he still paid lip service.

Wohlforth proceeded in the most impatient and arrogant manner to drive leading comrades, whom he saw as fixed opposites, out of the movement. Party work in the trade unions, the struggle to build fractions against the bureaucracy, was

almost completely abandoned. Wohlforth also turned away from the training of a cadre among the youth. Important youth activities and subscription campaigns for the *Bulletin* were emptied of political content and separated from the fight to educate and train a cadre. This could only lead to disorientation and liquidation of the party's ranks.

During this period Wohlforth carried his unprincipled behavior further than ever. He continued to pretend agreement with the International Committee while proceeding with a completely different perspective, as is proven by his own account. Contrary to what Wohlforth writes, the 1974 conference of the International Committee had important lessons for the Workers League, which he chose to ignore.

The central question discussed at the conference was the necessity to train a leadership in all of the sections as well as in the Workers League (which, while not a section, politically supports the IC). The conference discussed in minute detail the policies and leadership problems of all the newer sections. It made plans to actively intervene in every section over the next six months. This plan was actually over-fulfilled.

Wohlforth also lies when he says no Manifesto was issued from the conference (see *Fourth International*). Wohlforth not only refused to probe why under his leadership the Workers League was headed in the opposite direction to the IC. He also refused to report for security clearance the CIA connections of his co-delegate N. Fields.

By the time of the summer camp of 1974, the membership of the party had fallen and those remaining had not been shown how to draw knowledge from the development of the class struggle. No new recruits had been made among the new layers of workers and youth around the party. This decline in membership must be assessed within the overall context of the objective situation and the practice of the party. Objective class pressures did weigh down on the party and led some to leave the movement. But what Wohlforth cannot explain is why no new recruits had been made in the midst of the unprecedented opportunities opened up by the reaction of the working class to

the Watergate crisis and all the political developments. The answer lies in Wohlforth's own methods of leadership, his opposition to an actual struggle within the working class to recruit and train leaders.

The task of a leadership, basing itself on the dialectical understanding of how a party derives knowledge, is to hold fast the opposites within the party wherever possible. Wohlforth conceives the task of a leadership in the idealist way of simply putting a plus sign wherever there is, or he imagines there to be, a minus. He sees himself as having fought the idealists (whom he conceives as fixed opposites that do not include their own opposite within themselves), by counterposing to their current practice declamations on what it must become.

A Marxist leadership seeks to create the conditions in the practice where comrades can learn from their mistakes and make a development. This is the only way a cadre can be trained. Wohlforth was sometimes able to identify the opposites, but he never went beyond that by fighting to overcome the weaknesses of party work in practice. On the contrary, in the 1973-74 period, the party as a whole was turned away from a conscious practice in the working class. The formal method of identifying the opposites and refusing to fight to change them led to demoralization of many members, which was halted and reversed only when the struggle against Wohlforth was taken up later in 1974.

For the struggle of opposites to be possible, it is necessary that the opposites in the party be held together on the basis of party discipline, loyalty and a common struggle to implement perspectives. The leadership must be sensitive to the actual development of the cadres, without of course adapting to their weaknesses, and set about at all times to create the conditions for change.

This does not of course mean that all the opposites are permanently held. On the contrary the rapid development of the class struggle leads to a rupture of the old unity of opposites and their transformation into a new unity and conflict. This was certainly the case with Wohlforth himself.

Wohlforth's desertion was the result of an objective struggle of opposites within the party which reflected the movement of class forces in the material world. His pragmatic method was expressed in his practice in the party and his subsequent desertion as well as his written attack on our party.

This situation was also the background to the security question which emerged and which Wohlforth now tries to use to obscure the issues and cover his political tracks. The security question was the way in which Wohlforth's political and theoretical differences finally exploded. His complacency and middle class individualism led him to dangerously compromise the security of the movement.

Wohlforth's claim that the security investigation was a product of a conspiracy to "get him" and of paranoia is an insult to every revolutionist fighting to construct parties under the most difficult conditions today. The police and intelligence agencies of the capitalist state have always engaged in operations to infiltrate and destroy the revolutionary movement. Under the new conditions of the capitalist crisis and Watergate and the revelations about the CIA and FBI, it is clear that the ruling class will spare no effort to disrupt and destroy our movement.

We can only construct our party and train its cadres through the most meticulous attention to every aspect of the security of the movement.

For all of Wohlforth's ranting about preposterous charges, the facts of the matter are quite clear. Wohlforth, who had brought Nancy Fields into a position of leadership in the Workers League, permitted her to take part in important work despite the fact that he was aware that she had previously had close family connections to the CIA.

Neither Wohlforth nor Fields informed the Workers League of this matter so that it could be investigated and cleared. Wohlforth, who claims, "I considered it absurd to even think that Comrade Fields was a CIA agent," substituted his personal feelings and subjective relations with Fields for the established procedures of our movement on questions of security. The comrades with whom Fields worked were unaware of this background! Wohlforth concealed this information from his

comrades in the Workers League and the IC even when he was specifically asked about Fields' possible CIA connections.

Faced with this serious situation, the Central Committee of the Workers League acted to carry out an investigation through a commission of inquiry. This is strictly in accord with the established procedure of the Bolshevik movement. Wohlforth was removed as National Secretary August 31, 1974 by the CC of the Workers League, which voted to replace Wohlforth as National Secretary by Comrade Fred Mazelis, and to suspend Fields pending the outcome of the inquiry. This decision was voted unanimously including the votes of both Wohlforth and Fields.

Wohlforth was not removed as National Secretary and Fields was not suspended at that meeting because of Fields' previous family connections with the CIA. These actions were taken, as clearly stated and understood by all those in attendance at that meeting, solely because Wohlforth had withheld this information from the leading bodies of the movement.

It is therefore false and absurd to claim as Wohlforth now does that the findings of the inquiry that Fields was not connected to the CIA other than through these family relations, prove that the procedure was wrong. There would have been no purpose to the inquiry had the results of it been known in advance, and of course they were not. So blinded is Wohlforth by subjective idealism that he again equates his own opinion with the objective truth which the movement had itself to discover precisely because this information had been withheld.

Both Wohlforth and Fields refused to cooperate in any way with the work of the inquiry commission despite their votes to set it up. Wohlforth resigned from the Workers League only a few days before the inquiry was to begin. Despite this, both he and Fields were offered the opportunity to submit written or oral statements to the inquiry, and refused.

The inquiry established, after taking testimony from members of the Workers League and others who had been members during the past two years, that Wohlforth had withheld information vital to the security of the IC and the WL.

The inquiry fully established the existence of the CIA connections. It reported, "From the age of 12 until the completion

of her university education, Fields was brought up, educated and financially supported by her aunt and uncle Albert and Gigs Morris. Albert Morris is head of the CIA's IBM computer operation in Washington, as well as being a large stockholder. He was a member of the OSS, forerunner of the CIA, and worked in Poland as an agent of imperialism. During the 1960s a frequent house guest at their home in Maine was Richard Helms, ex-director of the CIA and now US ambassador in Iran."

The inquiry also established that Fields was not connected to the CIA except through these relations and immediately lifted the suspension from the Workers League.

The inquiry also recommended that Wohlforth withdraw his resignation and return to work in the League. The Commission of Inquiry issued its report on November 9, 1974. In December, Wohlforth applied for readmission to the League. He refused, however, to accept the political authority and discipline of the Workers League and was therefore not readmitted.

Wohlforth seeks in his statement to pander to all those petty-bourgeois elements who consider a serious concern with questions of security to be a matter of paranoia. We will leave these elements to do as they please, but we will not be dissuaded from training our members as they must be in this crucial period.

Wohlforth's desertion of the revolutionary movement over what he himself describes as a question of wrong procedure speaks volumes about his contempt for the working class and the revolutionary struggle. Even if there were any merit whatsoever to his complaints, his obligation was to stay and fight. His refusal to place the party and its security before his personal feelings led him out of the revolutionary movement and into the arms of its most reactionary opponents.

## **CONCLUSION: THE WORKERS LEAGUE TODAY**

We have traced the path of Wohlforth's degeneration. He developed a position of American exceptionalism and hostility to internationalism in the period following 1972. This was the

consequence of his refusal to break with the method of pragmatism in the practice of building the movement. This pragmatic method became the vehicle for his capitulation to the class pressures of the bourgeoisie. Wohlforth proceeded in the 1973-74 period in a completely dishonest way to attempt to liquidate the movement while pretending to defend the opposite perspective of the International Committee.

Wohlforth did not succeed in this attempt. The International Committee defeated his liquidationist perspective through a determined struggle to defend and develop the principles of the Fourth International in continuity with the whole history of struggle against liquidationism from Pablo, to Cannon, to Robertson and Lambert. Because this struggle against Wohlforth was joined, the Workers League stands today politically and theoretically armed for the task of building the mass revolutionary party. In this contradictory way, the Workers League has made an enormous development.

Wohlforth has, of course, refused to learn anything from this struggle. On the contrary, he had made a leap right out of the Trotskyist movement into an alliance with the most venomous revisionist tendencies internationally. He has turned sharply against the working class and the fight to build a revolutionary leadership against Stalinism, the trade union bureaucracy, and all the revisionists who cover up for them. His hatred for the party which he fought to construct for so many years now knows no bounds. He will make common cause with any political degenerate in order to throw mud on our movement.

The "perspective" Wohlforth sketches at the end of his document betrays just how much he has turned against his own past in which, whatever his difficulties, he did fight to build a movement.

First, he tells us that the Fourth International was never revolutionary. He writes:

*"Only the Fourth International defended and developed Marxism over the last decades. But this very same movement has been unable to live its ideas, to be a part of living revolutionary struggles. It has been molded out of a nonrevolutionary generation, even generations."*

That is to say, Wohlforth tells us that the ideas of the Fourth International were "good" and "pure," but it became corrupted through its material expression in the "bad" cadre which rallied around the idea. This phenomenon of "bad" cadre corrupting "good" ideas means that centrism now dominates the Workers League and the International Committee.

Wohlforth then proceeds to make his prognosis as to what is to be done about this situation. He writes:

*"In the history of the revolutionary movement, as in nature and biological processes, there have been breaks in continuity. In fact this has been the dominant development. All signs point to the fact that we are presently witnessing such a break. But history is history. What has happened, happened. The truth eventually finds roots among the new revolutionary forces and these roots lay a basis for a swift development of the next revolutionary generation. We hope that this document may contribute to this."*

In other words there has been a break in the continuity of the Marxist movement. The material instrument of the revolutionary movement, the parties of the Fourth International and its cadres, have been destroyed. But "the truth eventually finds roots." That is to say, the "pure" idea has been rescued from the destruction of the material forces that expressed it. This "pure" idea may once again find material expression, "in the next revolutionary generation." In the meantime, "history is history," or as Wohlforth says elsewhere in his document, "production continues."

If this reactionary drivel sounds familiar, let us remind Wohlforth of what he wrote in "In Defense of Trotskyism: An Answer to Those Who Vilify Our History." This was written in 1972 in reply to various tendencies in the SWP associated with Fender, Passen and others who had come to the conclusion that the Fourth International is centrist and had always been centrist, although the ideas it embodies were correct. We correctly assessed these tendencies at the time as having a thoroughly liquidationist perspective that put them to the right even of the Hansen-Novack-Barnes leadership of the SWP. Wohlforth then wrote in reply to these tendencies:

*"Our author's reasoning proceeds as follows: We begin with the idea. This idea is abstract and therefore separate from 'reality' . . . which is concrete. Due to its separation from the material world the idea is pure, uncontaminated, free from class pressures. The idea becomes supported by 'forces,' that is, by human beings organized into a party. These human beings and this party are concrete and as such are subject to pressures, vacillations, compromise and all sorts of human evils.*

*"The history of the Fourth International then becomes a history of the pure idea becoming corrupted by the concrete reality of human beings. Our task then becomes to negate all this corruption by denying all this history and retrieving the pure idea. Once this job is done then WE (the subject making the study) apply this idea and test it against concrete reality using the 'tools of Marxism.' And so the pure idea is ripped out of corrupting historical development, refurbished by the subject and reentered into concrete corrupting reality at the whim of the subject. Such an approach is idealist, subjective, and totally unhistorical and undialectical."*

Wohlforth then proceeded to correctly answer this tendency:

*"The idea does not exist floating around separated from the 'reality.' Ideas are the reflection of the material world within the minds of men. This reflection is not a passive process such as light being reflected into a mirror or onto film. It is actually the result of man's struggle as part of material reality to change nature in such a way that man survives and develops.*

*" . . . The actual history of the Fourth International is a rich history of the necessary struggle to realize the program of the Fourth International in the working class under exceptionally difficult circumstances. That development **succeeded** in the sense that we now enter a new period of class struggle with its tremendous potential for socialist revolution with — the Fourth International! It hasn't been destroyed."*

Wohlforth ended this pamphlet by drawing a very sharp political assessment of these liquidationist tendencies with whom he is now in complete agreement.

*"Clearly we are here dealing with a vicious anti-Marxist tendency hostile to the workers movement. It moves in this direction precisely to avoid responsibility for leadership in this new period of*

*class struggle. The International Committee, however, will grant nothing to such tendencies, will fight them to the end. This is because we view this struggle for Marxism as a central preparation now for our development of Marxist cadres in the working class which will prepare to lead socialist revolution itself."*

It is quite obvious that Wohlforth has now joined this "vicious anti-Marxist tendency." He proceeds as they did, pitting his subjective wishes against the historical tasks of the working class. Wohlforth cannot account for his own history. The record of struggle against revisionism including the struggle against the SWP, Robertson, and the Fender and Passen tendencies, is the most crushing answer to Wohlforth. He denies the history of the Fourth International because it means **subordinating** the individual to the international revolutionary party.

As we have seen, the conclusion of Wohlforth's philosophical break with Marxism is the liquidation of the revolutionary party. The revolutionary party can only be built in America in the most determined struggle for dialectical materialism against the pragmatic method by which the working class is limited in its spontaneous development. This was the main task Trotsky posed to the SWP in the course of the Burnham-Shachtman fight. The SWP turned its back on this theoretical struggle and planted the seeds of its subsequent degeneration.

The Workers League was founded as part of an international struggle led by the International Committee, against the degeneration of the SWP and their unprincipled reunification with the Pabloites. The main task facing the Workers League has been the struggle against pragmatism in the workers movement.

Today, much more than in 1964 when the Workers League (then the American Committee for the Fourth International) was founded, the economic crisis transforms the material conditions that gave rise to pragmatism, (i.e., the enormous growth of industry and technology in the United States in a short period of time) into their opposites. This means that the opportunities for building a mass Trotskyist party as part of the Fourth International are here as never before. This, however, is not an automatic, spontaneous process. The whole history of

the workers movement in the epoch of imperialism has borne out time and time again the main lesson of Lenin's *What Is To Be Done?* The working class will not spontaneously overcome the limits of bourgeois ideology and take power without a conscious struggle for Marxism by the revolutionary party against this spontaneous thinking.

Wohlforth has now viciously turned against this struggle. He concludes his document with the statement, "But this very same advanced technology lays a material basis for a tremendous leap in that most materialist of sciences — Marxism . . ." This statement is a paraphrase of Trotsky's prognosis in his "Marxism In Our Time."

Wohlforth, however, "forgets" Trotsky's many writings on the need for a revolutionary party. We are thereby left with the conclusion that the negation of pragmatism will take place simply out of the objective conditions. This is his rationale for his desertion of the Trotskyist movement. Wohlforth thereby "forgets" that the conscious struggle for Marxism is decisive. In this way he tries to blind the working class with his own petty-bourgeois complacency to lull it to sleep. He is forced now to lash out at the Workers League and the International Committee because we are more determined and more successful than ever in our fight to build the revolutionary party against all the centrists that he has now joined.

*April 15, 1975*



***The Fourth  
International  
and the  
Renegade  
Wohlforth***

**by David North  
and Alex Steiner**

**March - May, 1976**



# **The Fourth International and the Renegade Wohlforth**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The victory of the Vietnamese revolution, the crushing defeat of the pro-imperialist forces in Angola, and the upsurge of the working class in Spain all represent a new stage in the development of the world revolution.

Capitalism internationally is in the throes of the deepest economic crisis in its history, with the collapse of the post-war Bretton Woods policies leaving no possibilities for the use of Keynesian credit inflation to pull all the major capitalist countries out of the slump.

The insoluble character of the economic crisis is the driving force behind the development of the greatest revolutionary struggles in history.

In both the advanced capitalist and the colonial and semi-colonial countries, the world slump is having a shattering impact.

Entire nation states in Latin America and Africa, as well as Europe, are on the verge of bankruptcy. The gigantic banking institutions of the United States, Europe, Japan, and Canada have more than \$40 billion in outstanding loans to less developed countries, and these credit lines have run dry.

Meanwhile, the big banks, particularly in the United States, live in dread of the consequences of default on repayment of loans by such countries as Zaire, Zambia, Chile, Argentina, Peru, and even Mexico and Brazil.

The banking crisis is striking hard at the United States. The Currency Comptroller of the United States has placed 28 leading banks on the "problem" list, and 10 leading banks reported \$800 million lost through bad loans during the first nine months of 1975.

In Europe itself, Italy is virtually drained of all foreign currency reserves and has deliberately allowed the fall of the lira to gain a trading advantage over its economic competitors. Sterling and the French franc plunge downwards. The European "snake" is dead.

The economic slump is an international fact of life. The incontestable signposts of a new Great Depression are the decline in world trade, the new vicious turn in the trade war, and the gigantic growth in unemployment in all the major capitalist countries.

Unemployment in the United States stands above 8 million; in Britain, it is nearly 1.5 million and rapidly heading toward the 2 million mark; in West Germany, France and Italy, the jobless figures are all over 1 million. Unemployment will continue to rise throughout 1976.

During the 12 months preceding November 1975, world trade fell 10 percent.

None of the major capitalist countries have been able to bring inflation under control. In Britain, the annual rate is above 25 percent.

The slump is not a product of mistaken policies that can be corrected by skillful reformist measures. The slump is a historically necessary development for the capitalist system.

The slump is the means by which the system purges itself of surplus capital amassed during the boom which now exerts intolerable pressure upon the rate of profit.

The capitalists are compelled by this crisis to destroy the vast productive forces of society. Through the destruction of the living standards of millions — by means of bankruptcies, factory closures and attacks on working class organizations — the capitalists plan to reestablish favorable conditions for amassing profits.

This economic crisis at the same time is leading inexorably to war. The contraction of the world market intensifies all the

imperialist rivalries, brings to a head the conflict between Europe and America, and forces the imperialists to prepare for nuclear war against the workers states of the Soviet Union and China.

There is one inescapable conclusion that must be drawn from an understanding of the economic crisis. **A period of revolutionary struggle has opened up internationally and in the United States.**

The American ruling class is being driven from pillar to post by this world crisis. The victories of the masses of Indochina and Angola as well as the defeat of the rightist Falangist forces in Lebanon represent disasters for American imperialism.

Ford confronts an undefeated working class in this country after suffering these catastrophes. The economic crisis has galvanized the workers and peasants of the underdeveloped countries with the workers of the heavily industrialized countries in an international revolutionary movement. Ford must fight it out with the American working class while at the same time, as world policeman for capitalism, he faces revolutionary upheavals on every continent.

Developments within the Ford government — the internal divisions, challenges to its incumbency, resignations by its leading figures — are not simply the crisis of an administration. They reflect a crisis of class rule.

What is now being raised by this historic economic and political crisis is the question of state power. Either the working class in the United States is mobilized by the revolutionary party to smash the capitalist state and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat or the ruling class will destroy the working class through fascism and the barbarism of a Third World War.

The decisive factor in the great class battles at hand will be the leadership given to the working class by the revolutionary party. This means that the struggle begun by Trotsky for the building of the Fourth International must now achieve its culmination through the preparation of the International Committee and its member parties to win the leadership of the working class on the road to workers' state power.

The International Committee is called upon, in the historic

interests of the working class, to wage a relentless struggle to smash politically the agencies of imperialism within the workers' movement: the Stalinist bureaucracy, and Social Democrats, and their revisionist allies.

Stalinism, which developed in a period of the greatest defeats of the working class during the 1920s and 1930s, is itself in mortal crisis. The international offensive of the working class and the victories in Indochina have dealt massive blows to the bureaucracy and its theories of the "peaceful road to socialism."

The crisis of Stalinism is clearly expressed in the split between the Kremlin and the Stalinists of France and Italy, who attack the treatment of dissidents within the Soviet Union, while at the same time renouncing the dictatorship of the proletariat.

But it is precisely the crisis of Stalinism that lends enormous significance to the reactionary role of revisionism within the workers' movement. The Pabloite revisionists attempt to masquerade as Trotskyists only to more effectively help cover up for Stalinism and capitulate before imperialism.

The Socialist Workers Party, which broke from Trotskyism in 1963, now comes to the fore as the most directly subservient to imperialism of the revisionist servants of the counter-revolution.

It opposes the struggle of the masses against imperialism, a fact revealed clearly in its support for the CIA-backed forces in Angola, FNLA and UNITA.

It tells the working class to place its trust in the capitalist state, as is shown in its call for federal troops in Boston.

And at the same time, it covers up the crimes of Stalinism against the working class and the Trotskyist movement.

This is proven by the presence in the leadership of the Socialist Workers Party of two accomplices of the GPU, secret police of the Soviet Stalinists, Joseph Hansen and George Novack.

This bankrupt political party has recently acquired a new ally. His name is Tim Wohlforth. He works as a team with Nancy Fields. Their mentor is the GPU accomplice Joseph Hansen.

# The Wohlforth School of Falsification

The renegade Tim Wohlforth, who deserted the Workers League in late September 1974, has now proclaimed his political solidarity with the revisionist Socialist Workers Party and its discredited leader Joseph Hansen, accomplice of the GPU.

In a document published in the November 10, 1975 issue of *Intercontinental Press* co-authored with one Nancy Fields, Wohlforth asserts that the SWP "not only can play the central role in the construction of the revolutionary party in the United States, but can give an important lead to the forces of Trotskyism throughout the world."

Since the publication of that article, Wohlforth has become a regular contributor to both *Intercontinental Press* and *The Militant*.

The belated alliance of Wohlforth and the SWP comes as no surprise to either the International Committee of the Fourth International or the Workers League. As far back as April 1975, the Political Committee of the Workers League declared that Wohlforth's resignation represented "political agreement with the Socialist Workers Party revisionists" and that: "Along with this philosophical and political break with Marxism, he has, like Hansen, Robertson, and others who preceded him, attacked the history of Trotskyism, broken completely from internationalism and revolutionary centralism, and slandered the leadership of the Workers League and the International Committee." (*What Makes Wohlforth Run?*)

No, we are not surprised. This mating of political bankrupts is the most complete vindication of our struggle against the

What were these “national and world events”?

On August 31, 1974, the Central Committee of the Workers League removed Wohlforth from the position of national secretary which he had held since 1966. The Central Committee also suspended Nancy Fields from the Workers League. Both Wohlforth and Fields voted for these unanimously passed motions. There was nothing “hysterical” about these decisions, as Wohlforth later claimed.

The decisions were taken because the Central Committee discovered that Wohlforth was responsible for grave violations of revolutionary security and discipline which could not be tolerated when committed by any party member, least of all a national secretary. Wohlforth was responsible for having concealed from the leadership of the Workers League and the International Committee the fact that Nancy Fields had very close family ties with an important figure in the Central Intelligence Agency, her uncle Albert Morris.

In April 1974, Fields had attended an important international conference of the International Committee attended by delegates from a number of countries where revolutionary work must be conducted under conditions of illegality. Her security clearance was provided by Wohlforth, who knew about her family connections but did not inform the International Committee.

Wohlforth kept silent because, to put it bluntly, he was more interested in his intimate personal relationship with Fields than in the security of the Workers League and the Fourth International.

On August 18, 1974, at a meeting in London, Wohlforth was specifically asked whether Fields had any CIA connections and he replied, “No.”

But 13 days later, when the Central Committee of the Workers League learned — but not from Wohlforth or Fields — of the CIA family connections of Fields, Wohlforth changed his position. He now admitted that he knew of Fields’s family connections with the CIA.

At first, Wohlforth said that he did not think the connections were important. However, he changed his mind and voted for

his removal as national secretary and for the suspension of Fields.

He also voted for a third proposal passed unanimously by the Central Committee: to set up a commission of inquiry to investigate the security questions involved.

The action of the Central Committee was supported by the entire membership of the Workers League. This is why when Wohlforth deserted the Workers League — timing his resignation to avoid facing the commission of inquiry — no one joined him except his bride-to-be Nancy Fields.

Wohlforth left the Workers League utterly discredited. His behavior had left him exposed as a petty bourgeois who had not the slightest concern with the security of the movement of which he was a leader, nor the least interest in advancing the struggle for the social revolution. To Wohlforth, his own personal interests were much more important than those of the working class.

Once out of the Workers League, Wohlforth immediately made his contact with Joseph Hansen, who congratulated him on his renegacy, writing that Wohlforth's "sincerity is undeniable and one can only wish him better luck on his next venture."

The fact that Wohlforth should be welcomed by Hansen like the prodigal son is not in the least bit surprising. The fact that Wohlforth endangered the security of the Trotskyist movement could not fail to please Hansen, Trotsky's traitor-secretary.

Hansen has deliberately covered up for the crimes of GPU murderers like Mark Zborowski, who arranged the assassinations of Leon Sedov, Ignace Reiss, Rudolf Klement, and Trotsky. He has praised the GPU agent Sylvia Franklin, who infiltrated the SWP national office in the late 1930s, as an "exemplary comrade."

He has covered up for the GPU fifth column which, according to the sworn testimony of **Thomas L. Black** given before the Senate Judiciary Committee, was operating within the villa of Coyoacan where Trotsky resided between 1937 to 1940.

Hansen has suppressed for 38 years details of his personal contacts with the GPU agent "John," the alias of **Dr. Gregory**

**Rabinowitz**, the central figure in the Stalinist spy ring operating in the Socialist Workers Party for the purpose of preparing the assassination of Trotsky.

Hansen has covered up for the activities of GPU agent **Floyd Cleveland Miller**, the American Stalinist who was able to obtain important posts and assignments within the Socialist Workers Party.

Having given aid and comfort to the GPU in its war against the Fourth International, it was perfectly natural for Hansen to give every assistance to Tim Wohlforth.

A decade of the bitterest political differences between Wohlforth and the Socialist Workers Party has been simply "forgotten." Wohlforth writes regularly for *Intercontinental Press* and *The Militant*. Nancy Fields, who never appeared before a commission of inquiry to explain why she hid her ties with her CIA uncle from the Workers League, nor explained the full details of her relations with him, has been given the key to the SWP's Brooklyn office and now occupies a position of leadership.

Wohlforth's return to the SWP is the consummation of his break with Marxism. His alliance with the GPU accomplice Hansen is his alliance with the counterrevolution.

One can find almost no parallel for the cynicism and haste with which Wohlforth carried out his break with the revolutionary movement and passed over to the camp of the enemy. He unites with Hansen and the SWP without the slightest explanation of how he changed his past views.

He only states that he arrived at his conclusion that the SWP "can play the central role" in building the revolutionary party after he himself had spent "a decade of struggle to build the International Committee and Workers League, at many points in sharpest opposition to the SWP."

When Wohlforth refers to "many points," he is deliberately vague. Perhaps he has been suddenly stricken with a convenient case of amnesia, but the written record still exists. He knows very well the character of his new allies. Wohlforth wrote about them many times.

In particular, Wohlforth is familiar with the anti-Trotskyist

methods of Joseph Hansen. This is why Wohlforth, when he decided to peddle his smears against the International Committee, turned immediately to Hansen.

In fact, before Wohlforth repudiated Marxism, he specifically associated the degeneration of the Socialist Workers Party with the emergence of Joseph Hansen as its leading figure.

In his lengthy assessment of the history of the Socialist Workers Party, published as a book in 1971, Wohlforth wrote:

*"Hansen's theoretical role in the postwar history of the SWP was not a personal matter. He reflected — perhaps a bit more grotesquely than others — the empiricist method of the SWP. His theories were developed as impressionistic reactions to current developments or to serve political and factional purposes. A theory once developed would be lightly discarded when either the objective situation or the factional need changed. Thus in 1949 and 1950 Hansen, together with Cochran, reacted in the same impressionistic way as did Pablo to the expansion of Stalinism. Their views were if anything cruder, more vulgar than Pablo's. In 1952 and 1953, Hansen responded to the internal factional needs of the Cannon group in the SWP and became the foremost advocate of the view that Stalinism was 'counterrevolutionary through and through.' In 1954 and 1955, in the climate of McCarthyism and reaction, Hansen experimented with state capitalism, a position about as far removed politically — if not methodologically — from his 1949 position as one could get. By 1958, when the party's tactical needs required an adaptation to the Stalinists, Hansen was to return to his earlier Pabloite views. This was to prepare him for his future role as the foremost battler against orthodoxy and for a return to the Pabloites. Only a party deeply sick with the disease of empiricism would let such a person occupy a leading position in its central leadership." (Wohlforth, *The Struggle for Marxism in the United States*, Labor Publications, p. 140, emphasis added)*

A devastating political assessment of Hansen, one which Wohlforth would prefer to forget. But it sums up how Hansen, for his factional purposes, is able to welcome Wohlforth back into the fold solely for the purpose of using him against the International Committee.

Wohlforth, of course, knows this too. After all, he once

described how Hansen used James Robertson for the same purpose. Referring to Hansen's defense of Robertson after the latter was expelled from the IC Conference in 1966, Wohlforth wrote: "Hansen's purpose is clearly to use Robertson to discredit the International Committee so as to build up the Pabloite United Secretariat and seal off the ranks of the Pabloites from the political criticism of the IC. Hansen not only refrains in his introduction from any serious criticism of Robertson, but actually works himself up into a sympathetic sweat over Robertson's health at the Conference." (Wohlforth, *What is Spartacist?*, Labor Publications, pp. 66-67)

Even more to the point is Wohlforth's final — and presumably most mature — judgment of Hansen only three months before his resignation from the Workers League.

On June 14, 1974, Wohlforth informed Gerry Healy in a letter: "I will write a 'What We Think' on Hansen for next week."

Sure enough, one week later, the first of two articles appeared with Wohlforth's unvarnished view of Joseph Hansen. It bore the appropriate title: "Joseph Hansen — An Aging Liar Peddles His Wares." It began:

*"Joseph is at it again. Hansen has functioned for over ten years as the chief advocate, apologist, and downright liar for the Socialist Workers Party in its struggle against the Trotskyist movement.*

*"His task has become more difficult in the recent period. After all, Hansen more than any one else can be credited with bringing about the reunification of the SWP-supported splitoff from the International Committee with the Mandel-led International Secretariat. That International body has been torn apart by a factional struggle some five years old. . . .*

*"We do believe that the architect owes some explanation to the inhabitants of the house now that the house has all but collapsed — only ten years after it was constructed!*

*"But Joseph Hansen is not a man for honest appraisals of past conduct. He operates in quite the opposite manner. The more naked he becomes, the more he points his finger at everyone else claiming they are naked.*

*"This is why he has done his best to prevent a full and open discussion between the International Committee and the United Secretariat, even though this has been proposed on a number of*

*occasions. This is why he publishes some 253 pages of old slanders and attacks on the International Committee under the title 'Marxism vs. Ultra-leftism: The Record of Healy's Break with Trotskyism.'* (Bulletin, June 21, 1974, p. 2)

Every word a jewel! And as Hansen said, Wohlforth's "sincerity is undeniable."

Since he wrote that editorial, Wohlforth has decided to take off his clothes and peddle his own lies alongside those of Hansen.

But two aging liars cannot remake history any better than one. With his own words, Wohlforth has shown himself to be one of the most accomplished liars in the annals of revisionism.

Knowing full well what Hansen is and what he represents politically, Wohlforth has nevertheless decided to work with him against the International Committee.

All political judgments made by Wohlforth prior to his cowardly resignation from the Workers League have become "inoperative." The starting point of Wohlforth's politics, it is clear, is not consideration of objective truth and the interests of the working class, but rather the subjective needs of Wohlforth.

The utter shamelessness and treachery of Wohlforth reflects the behavior of a miserable petty bourgeois ex-radical who, having broken with Marxism, is rapidly moving into the camp of counterrevolution and imperialism.

His actions are to be associated with those politically-diseased elements who after a brief accidental sojourn in the revolutionary movement eventually find their proper niche among the most reactionary forces.

Trotsky had a name for such elements, and it applies to Wohlforth. He called them "The garbage of the revolution."

# *In the Footsteps of Kant*

“Anyone acquainted with the history of the struggles of tendencies within the workers’ parties knows that desertion to the camp of reaction began not infrequently with rejection of the dialectic.” (*In Defense of Marxism*, “Open Letter to Comrade Burnham,” Trotsky, New Park Publications, p.94)

Wohlforth became a renegade from Marxism at the point in the development of the world economic crisis when the preparation of the revolutionary party to lead the working class to the conquest of power became the fundamental task.

Having abandoned the Marxist movement, he took the next logical step of joining the agents of the class enemy within the workers’ movement.

He has prepared himself for this Judas-role through an attack on the fundamental principles of dialectical materialism, the philosophical foundations of Marxism. Every revisionist and every renegade today is forced to launch an assault on Marxist philosophy as they prepare to betray the working class.

That the enemies of Marxism are forced to reveal their philosophical method is itself a great gain for the Marxist movement. This enables the revolutionary party to completely unmask the enemies of the revolution on every fundamental theoretical and practical question facing the working class.

The feverish pitch of the ideological struggle is a reflection of the enormous social tensions produced by the crisis of capitalism. The two great classes are putting on their battle dress. The struggle on philosophy is the precursor of the armed struggle.

The International Committee of the Fourth International has been the protagonist in this fight for Marxist philosophy. It has

deepened the struggle against revisionism by consistently fighting through every question in dispute between ourselves and the revisionists to its philosophical roots.

The revisionists have not been able to ignore this struggle. On the contrary, all the revisionist tendencies we have fought have been forced to reveal their methodological break with Marxism.

In 1971, the French Organisation Communiste Internationaliste (OCI) split from the International Committee. This split came directly on the fundamental question of philosophy. The OCI denied that dialectical materialism was the theory of knowledge of Marxism and even dismissed talk of Marxist philosophy as "metaphysics." The OCI maintained that Marxism was a fixed and finished body of knowledge, whose highest point of development was incarnated in the *Transitional Program* of the Fourth International written in 1938.

The OCI thought that formal adherence to the program was some kind of a guarantee against degeneration. This meant that the OCI denied the necessity to fight on the theoretical front against the influence of bourgeois ideology within the working class. This capitulation to spontaneity was the vehicle for the OCI's liquidationist course toward unity with all the centrists and opportunists, such as the Spanish POUM, who had long ago broken from the Trotskyist movement.

By making the program primary (instead of the Marxist method, which is the source of the program and through which the party develops Marxism) the OCI found a formula to get together with anyone claiming formal adherence to the program.

At the center of the OCI's attack on dialectical materialism was its denial that the conflict of opposites between theory and practice was the source of the development of the party. Instead, it spoke of a unity of opposites divorced from the necessary conflict of opposites.

Any objective assessment of the present course of the OCI fully vindicates the timeliness of the IC's struggle against this revisionist tendency. In France, the OCI carries out a

liquidationist course, limiting its program to an abstract call for unity between the Social Democrats and the Stalinists and dropping any demands for socialist policies and the building of an alternative revolutionary leadership.

On an international scale, the OCI has established the most unprincipled relations with all manner of centrists. In Spain, the OCI closely collaborates with the POUM, the party Trotsky specifically indicted in the 1930s as bearing central responsibility, because of their opportunist policies, for the defeat of the Spanish working class. In the United States the OCI extends a comradely handshake to the revisionist Socialist Workers Party and is in agreement with the SWP's capitulation to Social Democracy in Portugal.

The struggle of the IC against the OCI had the additional effect of smoking out George Novack, who intervened in this discussion to solidarize himself philosophically with the OCI.

Novack maintained that it was "sectarian" to fight in the party for clarity on philosophical questions. He stated that philosophy was a private matter and subordinate to the program of the party. This was Novack's way of seeking to disarm the Trotskyist movement theoretically, as he sought to disarm it politically by covering up the crimes of Stalinism.

This revealed that Novack did not regard Marxism as an indispensable guide to revolutionary action, but saw it instead as some kind of academic doctrine with little relation to practice. Behind this contemplative view of philosophy was Novack's adherence to the idealist outlook of pragmatism and empiricism, which sees the accumulation of knowledge as a passive recognition of facts and generalizations from the facts.

The IC's struggle for dialectical materialism was continued on a higher level in the fight waged against Alan Thornett, who became a renegade from the Workers Revolutionary Party in 1974. Thornett had rejected the unity of opposites and posited a conflict of opposites divorced from the unity of opposites.

Behind this lay a rejection of man's unity with nature and thus of the objective material basis for man's historical practice and the development of theory.

Thornett saw the party in absolute opposition to the working class of which it is a part. Instead of the unity, conflict, interpenetration, and transformation of these opposites, Thornett searched for an intermediary bridge to link together the two abstracted "opposites," the party and the working class. This "bridge" was a program of reformist demands which was to be employed to gradually push the working class to the left. Through his descent into subjective idealism, Thornett had become a left apologist for the policies of the labor and trade union bureaucracy and a bitter opponent of Trotskyism.

Finally, we have the entry of Wohlforth into this philosophical struggle. Wohlforth is by far the crudest, most eclectic revisionist of them all. He picks up bits and pieces of everything, tears them out of their historical context, and gives them his own personal meaning, in order to free himself from any responsibility to anything beyond himself.

He agrees with Thornett that the conflict of opposites can be divorced from the unity of opposites. He agrees with Novack and Hansen that knowledge begins with the "facts" of empiricism. He agrees with the OCI that there is no such thing as Marxist philosophy.

This eclectic picking and choosing guided by purely factional considerations is the method of pragmatism and subjective idealism. Wohlforth has gone over to the pragmatist method of the American bourgeoisie.

The American bourgeoisie was able to develop the productive forces in an earlier period by eclectically borrowing techniques and accomplishments from Europe without any understanding of the theoretical struggle which had been necessary for these material gains to have been made.

The essence of the theory of knowledge of pragmatism is its denial of an objective material world external to consciousness, behaving according to laws, knowledge of which can be and is appropriated by man in the fight to transform nature. Pragmatism recognizes only the experience, opinions, and practice of an individual divorced from any connection to the law-governed processes of nature and history.

We shall show that Wohlforth has descended into this noxious variety of subjective idealism. He constructs a very personalized view of philosophy and history so that he can free himself from any constraints and responsibility thrown up by the class struggle. He frees himself from any responsibility to the working class, in this way to become a better servant of the bourgeoisie.

Like Novack and Thornett, Wohlforth has revealed himself to be a wretched Kantian. He cuts the connection between the forms of appearance and objective reality (the "thing-in-itself") and conceals subjective schemas and impressions in his head as a substitute for universal matter in motion.

We shall show that behind the appearance of chaos presented by this eclectic outlook lies his philosophical kinship with the OCI, Thornett, and Novack. Despite the different forms of each of these attacks on dialectical materialism, the content is the same: the challenge to dialectical materialism by subjective idealism.

The practical conclusions are also the same: the disarming of the revolutionary party in the face of great events, capitulation to the labor bureaucracy and the national interests of one's "own" bourgeoisie.

All the attacks on Marxist philosophy are attacks on what Marx called the head of the revolution. They are inextricably linked with attacks on the heart of the revolution, the proletariat. They express counterrevolutionary forces thrown up by the new stage of the world revolution.

In defeating all these challenges to Marxism, the International Committee has made a giant leap in the preparation of the Bolshevik cadre to lead the working class to the conquest of power.

In the document he wrote just a few months ago, "The Workers League and the International Committee," Wohlforth still made a pretense of defending dialectical materialism against what he called our adaptation to the "centrist metaphysics" of Novack and others. He claimed to defend Marxism against Novack and against the Workers League and the International Committee.

At that time, he wrote: "Novack saw the moments of dialectics in a fashion which wiped out any real contradiction or struggle."

He then proceeded to attack the International Committee for its alleged adaptation to the method of Novack, writing, "This emphasis on transition can become a concession to centrist metaphysics which envisions fixed entities which survive the process of contradiction and provide transition and continuity to the processes of matter and life."

The fraudulent nature of Wohlforth's protestations is now out in the open for everyone to see. Several months ago, Wohlforth claimed to be a more consistent opponent of Novack's "centrist metaphysics" than the International Committee.

Now, Wohlforth publicly joins with Novack and announces his solidarity with the latter on questions of philosophy. All this without even a word of explanation.

In our pamphlet *What Makes Wohlforth Run?*, we completely exposed the real content of Wohlforth's attack on dialectical materialism. We noted then that behind all of Wohlforth's demagogic pronouncements against "centrist metaphysics" lay the fact that "... Wohlforth has joined the revisionists Hansen and Novack in their attack on dialectics and capitulation to empiricism and pragmatism."

In logic, as in politics, he who says "A" must also say "B." Having joined Novack and Hansen in their attack on the philosophical foundations of Marxism, it was inevitable that Wohlforth would shortly drop all pretense of fighting their "centrist metaphysics" and join them openly on every question.

Wohlforth's evolution, which we predicted with unerring accuracy, is itself one of the greatest vindications of the analytical power of dialectical materialism.

In *What Makes Wohlforth Run?*, we dissected Wohlforth's philosophical kinship with revisionism. "The SWP spokesmen Hansen and Novack maintained and maintain to this day that the starting point for Marxists is the same as for empiricists: 'the facts,' or as Wohlforth would have it, the particular. This is the method employed by Wohlforth in his statement." (*What*

*Makes Wohlforth Run?)*

Wohlforth now openly and unashamedly admits that this was and is his method. He writes:

*"The argument of Healy's followers that it is somehow a compromise with pragmatism to note that pragmatism and Marxism both begin in the cognitive process with facts, the particular, is infantile. Pragmatism and Marxism share a common starting point, but when one assesses the two theories of knowledge as a whole, their opposed character is revealed."*

We shall show that this is a complete falsification of the relationship between pragmatism and Marxism. In fact, rarely have so many distortions been crammed into so few words. Like the "empirio-critics" at the turn of the century, Wohlforth tries to reconcile Marxism with subjective idealism in order to disarm the revolutionary party in its preparation for power.

Lenin unmasked the philosophical distortions of the empirio-critics in his *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*. This was a vital contribution to the formation of the Bolshevik Party and its preparation for power. It is no less important for us to unmask Wohlforth's philosophical charlatantry in order to steel the cadres of the revolutionary movement in the method of Marxism.

The heart of Wohlforth's attack on Marxist philosophy lies in his statement,

*"All knowledge begins with a sense perception of a particular object or objects. To deny this is to drive matter out of the thinking process. Immediately your mind, through a cognitive process, seeks to connect the object observed to other objects — to identify a tall green object as a tree. Thus a particular is brought into unity and conflict with the universal."*

This statement brands Wohlforth as a subjective idealist and an unprincipled eclectic in philosophy. Wohlforth's views on philosophy are completely parallel to his unprincipled politics. What Wohlforth does is to combine elements of empirical sense data theory with a bit of Kantianism.

Kant denied the possibility of true knowledge of objective reality. Knowledge, according to him, was restricted to the

"phenomena" contained in sensations; the relations between these phenomena were imposed upon them by the mind and its own laws or categories. Kant recognized that an objective reality or "thing-in-itself" lay behind and at the source of the "phenomena" given in the senses but he considered the world of phenomena to be an impassable barrier between human thinking and the "thing-in-itself."

It is necessary to dissect all the implications of Wohlforth's statements in order to see where he stands on the most basic questions in the fight between dialectical materialism and subjective idealism. We will show Wohlforth's positions on the following questions:

**1. Is the material world an interconnected unity? Another form of the same question would be: "Does the universal exist in nature?"**

**2. Is thinking a material process?**

**3. Does thinking reflect being?**

**4. Is the universal present in cognition?**

**5. What is the content of "experience"?**

**6. Is there a dialectical path of cognition from appearance to the "thing-in-itself"? (as against Kant's view that appearance prevents access to "thing-in-itself.")**

In answering the first question, Does the universal exist in nature?, we must briefly review the scientific developments upon which dialectical materialism was founded.

The world outlook and theory of knowledge of Marxism, dialectical materialism, was the culmination and negation of all previous developments in science and philosophy. While the development of the class struggle in the first part of the nineteenth century provided an objective impulse for the new materialist outlook, it was man's increasing understanding of nature through the development of the natural sciences, and its reflection in bourgeois philosophy culminating in Hegel, that first made possible the systematic elaboration of Marx's philosophy.

What science had already established in the nineteenth century, in its general outline if not in every detail, was the unity, evolution, and lawful interconnectedness of nature. All

phenomena in the universe were discovered to be connected **objectively** to all other phenomena through their necessary laws of motion. There were no unbridgeable gaps between different parts of the universe as Aristotle thought existed between heaven and earth. All the variety and difference within nature were discovered to be different forms of universal matter in motion.

The defect of previous mechanical materialism was that it was imprisoned within a metaphysical outlook, which could not consistently account for the unity and interconnectedness of nature that was being established in the natural sciences. The metaphysical outlook saw everything as fixed and rigid. Engels characterized it in *Anti-Duhring*: "Yea, Yea; Nay, Nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil . . . Positive and negative absolutely exclude one another and cause and effect stand in a rigid antithesis to one another." (Frederick Engels, *Anti-Duhring*, Lawrence and Wishart, p. 31)

It is this metaphysical outlook that Wohlforth adopts when he counterposes the particular to the universal. Like his historical predecessors, Wohlforth cannot possibly comprehend how one form of matter is transformed into its opposite, how within the multifarious "particular" phenomena, there exists the universal, and how the universal and particular interpenetrate and are transformed into each other. For metaphysicians such as Wohlforth, either you have "pure" universals, an identity without inner differentiation and particularity, or you have only "particular" things cut off from the universal.

In the history of philosophy, this metaphysical outlook vitiated the development of a consistent materialism. In the case of the French materialists, for instance, when they attempted to give a materialist account of society and history, their materialism collapsed and they ended up with the idealist conclusion that society is a product of the ideas of men.

This defect of mechanical materialism was only overcome after Marx succeeded in rescuing Hegel's dialectics from its idealist and mystical integument. Only on this basis was a consistent materialist understanding of the laws of nature, society, and thinking made possible.

Having rejected dialectics, Wohlforth follows the logic of the metaphysical outlook to the conclusion of subjective idealism. While Wohlforth's metaphysical outlook recalls all the weaknesses of the empiricists and mechanical materialists, he shares none of their strengths. Whereas the empiricists and mechanical materialists tried to base themselves on the science of the time, Wohlforth rejects all the gains in theory and practice upon which dialectical materialism stands today.

The dialectical materialist outlook replaces the old metaphysical rigid distinctions with concepts expressing the mobility, interconnectedness, and process of development of the universe. For dialectical materialism, opposites are united at the same time as they are in conflict. Identity, universality, is seen to be identity which includes difference, universality which includes particularity. The idealist conception that the unity of the world consists in the Idea (which is another name for God) is replaced with the materialist conception that the unity of the world consists in its materiality.

At the same time, dialectical materialism also overcomes the nominalism latent in empiricism and mechanical materialism, which denied the unity of the world altogether and maintained the absolute uniqueness of things and events.

Wohlforth rejects everything that has been established by dialectical materialism and tries to resurrect the old nominalism rooted in the outlook of metaphysics. The counterposing of fixed opposites permeates everything he writes. This is the reactionary content of his statement, "All new knowledge begins with a sense perception of a particular object or objects," and, "The dialectical process can never begin from a universal." Wohlforth thereby breaks up the material unity of the world, denies that the world is an interconnected unity with lawful relations inherent throughout.

For the monistic outlook of dialectical materialism, Wohlforth substitutes a pluralistic view of the universe. The universal, as far as Wohlforth is concerned, does not exist in nature. At the same time, he breaks up the unity of subject and object, which here come together as if having entirely separate origins.

Wohlforth's rejection of the universal is explicitly put when he says, "What the Workers League does is begin with the universal, with abstract, formal and rigid conceptions, which it seeks to impose on reality."

In other words, Wohlforth takes the universal to be some kind of conception — whether a formal conception or some other kind of conception is besides the point. This is the real, subjective idealist content of his outlook, which very explicitly makes the universal synonymous with his ideas.

At the same time, Wohlforth has no compunction about completely contradicting himself. He says at another point, "Of course (!) the universal relation is no less real, a part of matter, than the particular."

Here Wohlforth follows the shabby procedure of his revisionist ally Alan Thornett. In reply to Thornett, Cde. Michael Banda of the Workers Revolutionary Party wrote a 14-part series exposing Thornett's attack on Bolshevism and demonstrating how it flowed out of Thornett's one-sided elevation of man's struggle against nature at the expense of man's fundamental unity with nature. Thornett then came up with a reply which dealt with only one part of the 14 articles and said, in effect, "Of course, man is in unity with nature." Of course!

Of course, Thornett and Wohlforth, like every revisionist, want to dismiss and take for granted the fundamental question of philosophy, materialism or idealism. Wohlforth thinks he can write any idealist rubbish he likes, as long as he pays a little hollow lip-service to materialism along the way.

Wohlforth must explain how he can say in one breath that the universal exists in nature and then say that the universal is a concept. If we read further, we can see the fraudulent way in which Wohlforth tries to get around his own inconsistency.

He writes: "It is simply that in nature the universal is expressed through the particular and does not exist separately from it. There are particular trees in the world, but no universal 'tree' lacking particularity."

Wohlforth says, in other words, that the universal exists only through the particular. He does not, however, tell us whether the particular exists apart from the universal. What he does, in

fact, is to paraphrase one section of Lenin's famous "Essay on Dialectics" which explains how the universal is expressed through the particular. But he consciously leaves out another section which makes the equally important point that no particular exists apart from the universal. The result is a one-sided distortion of the dialectical relationship between the universal and the particular. The entire relevant section reads as follows:

*"Consequently, the opposites (the individual is opposed to the universal) are identical: the individual exists only in the connection that leads to the universal. The universal exists only in the individual and through the individual. (It is this latter statement which Wohlforth paraphrases — DN & AS.) Every individual is in one way or another a universal. Every universal is (a fragment, or an aspect, or the essence of) an individual. Every universal only approximately embraces all the individual objects. (Wohlforth ignores these lines — DN & AS.) Every individual enters incompletely into the universal, etc., etc. Every individual is connected by thousands of transitions with other kinds of individuals (things, phenomena, processes), etc."* V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works, Vol. 38*, Progress Publishers, p. 361)

In his mutilation of this passage is revealed the kernel of Wohlforth's pragmatism. He picks and chooses those aspects of dialectics which conform to his own subjective schemas and ignores all that which does not suit him. In doing so, needless to say, he turns dialectics into its opposite. Instead of grasping cognition as a practice which brings man ever closer to knowledge of reality, he transforms it into a set of formulas that distort and obliterate reality.

Once the unity of the material world is rejected, it is clear that the dialectical materialist conception of the unity between matter and thought must follow. And this is precisely what follows from Wohlforth who tells us that thinking is a **mental process**, that it stands out in an **absolute** opposition to all other forms of matter in motion. He writes, "This we stress is a **mental process** and is **impossible** without the first **initial** impulse from the material world." (Emphasis in original — DN & AS.)

Dialectical materialism of course recognizes that **matter** and **thinking** are **opposites**, but their opposition is relative and not absolute. Thinking itself is the product of matter and is impossible without matter.

Engels wrote that it is " . . . self-evident that the products of the human brain being in the last analysis also products of nature, do not contradict the rest of nature's interconnections, but are in correspondence with them." (Frederick Engels, *Anti-Duhring*, Lawrence and Wishart, p.49.)

Wohlforth, having rejected the unity of opposites expressed in dialectical thinking, cannot at all comprehend Lenin's statement:

*" . . . Matter is primary. Sensation, thought, consciousness are the supreme product of matter organized in a particular way." (V.I. Lenin, Materialism and Empirio-Criticism, Progress Publishers, Vol. 14, Collected Works.)*

To Wohlforth, the particular properties of thinking which differentiate it from matter mean that thinking is excluded from any interaction with universal matter in motion.

It is the particular property of thought to reflect matter in motion existing independently of thought. The ability to think is itself a property of matter organized in a particular way — the human brain.

Wohlforth's denial of the material connection between **matter** and **thought** is his way of denying the **primacy of matter to thought**.

Here we see how dualism, the rejection of the material unity of the world, leads straight to idealism. In place of the human brain as the highest form of evolution of matter Wohlforth substitutes a "mind" independent of matter. For the materialist proposition that perception and thought are reflections of independently existing matter, Wohlforth instead discovers a "mental process." This "mental process" has its own unique manner of functioning, quite independent of universal matter in motion.

Once Wohlforth denies that thinking is a material process, it

immediately follows that he must reject the proposition of dialectical materialism that thinking reflects being. This is why Wohlforth maintains that the starting point for cognition is somehow different ("This we stress is a mental process") than the starting point for any material process.

Instead of the practice of cognition, like all material processes, starting with the unity of the universal and particular (and its reflection through thought concepts in transition into one another), Wohlforth insists that thinking starts only from the particular.

From everything said previously, it becomes clear how Wohlforth answers our next question — Is the universal present in cognition?

Dialectical materialism maintains that thought concepts, which reflect universal matter in motion, include the universal. The universal is present in the first moment of cognition as a reflection of the universal which exists independently of consciousness. Wohlforth explicitly denies this. He maintains, if we recall, that cognition begins only with the particular.

But as much as Wohlforth denies the point that as soon as we cognize we reflect the universal, he cannot avoid making this point unconsciously by virtue of the fact that as a cognitive being, he takes part in the lawful process of cognition whether he likes it or not. Thus when he tries to indicate what a particular is, giving the example of a tree, he already describes it as a universal, without of course realizing what he is doing. He does not realize that when he indicates "a tall green object" and "this particular tree," he is already naming a universal. This is because, as Hegel said, "Language in essence expresses only the universal; what is meant, however, is the special, the particular. Hence what is meant cannot be said in speech."

Lenin commented on this passage,

*"For the sensuous is a universal!*

*"Thereby Hegel hits every materialism except dialectical materialism." (V.I. Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. 38, Progress Publishers, p. 277)*

Language must express the universal because the formation of a thought concept is a reflection of the universal movement of matter. We do not, as Wohlforth thinks, have first a **singular** sense perception and then the formation of a **general** thought concept. We already have the universal within perception. There is a unity of subject and object, of particular and universal, as the very condition of perception and cognition. Cognition must begin with this unity. This is what Lenin meant by: "The sensuous is a universal."

Wohlforth tries to substitute for the materialist proposition that the universal is **reflected** in the practice of cognition the idealist proposition that the universal is **constructed** by an independently existing mind. That is how he tries to extricate himself from the nominalist chaos he has manufactured. To save himself, he digs up the arguments once employed by Kant.

Kant, like the empiricists, held that in sensation, we are only given particular representations. From this starting point, Kant tried to restore the objective order and causal connections between our sense perceptions.

He endowed consciousness with the ability to connect different perceptions. It was the function of consciousness that guaranteed the objective order of our perceptions.

This solution of Kant's turns everything upside down. Instead of consciousness reflecting the objective order of things, it is consciousness that provides order to the chaos of sense perceptions.

In this way, Kant brought the universal back to particular phenomena, but only from outside of the particulars, as a product of the functioning of consciousness. The idealist premise behind Kant's position was that the universal is constructed by the subjective mind. Kant denied that the universal, which exists objectively external to consciousness, can be known and that in thinking, we **reflect** this universal.

Kant stated his position in the following manner:

*"For we know nature only as the totality of appearances, that is, of the representations in us; and hence we can only derive the laws*

*of their connection from the principles of their connection in us, that is, from the conditions of their necessary union in one consciousness which constitutes the possibility of experience.*" (Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, Library of Liberal Arts Edition, p.66)

If this statement of Kant sounds like a refrain of Wohlforth's statement ("... your mind, through a cognitive process, seeks to connect the object observed to other objects ... Thus a particular is brought into unity and conflict with a universal"), this is not accidental. Wohlforth has plagiarized all this from Kant.

The upshot of this return to Kant is the denial of the objective causal laws of nature and society. Causality, instead, becomes a completely subjective category of the mind, as it was for Hume and Kant.

This becomes a crucial point for Wohlforth to establish against dialectical materialism. Once objective necessity is tossed overboard, Wohlforth is free. Or so he thinks.

In reality, his mental constructions, which he substitutes for the universal, leave him a helpless pawn of the very historical laws whose force he denies. Only now, he expresses the grip of alien class forces.

The next question Wohlforth must answer is — What is the content of "experience"? The word "experience" should first be disentangled from the quasi-mystical connotations it held for James and the pragmatists. The pragmatists set up "experience" as a category that transcends the dichotomy between being and thought, theory and practice, subject and object.

Dialectical materialism, on the other hand, knows no such transcendent category. The unity between theory and practice is something that must be established and continually reestablished through the process of continual conflict between theory and practice, on the unshakeable foundation of the unity of the material world, the condition of this conflict and development in which thought, theory, the subjective, are products of being, or practice, of the objective world.

It cannot be otherwise, because thinking always lags behind

ing. The continual struggle to unite theory and practice through their conflict results in a closer approximation of our thought concepts to the objective material world. We are, however, never able to achieve a full and complete correspondence between the two.

This relationship between theory and practice flows directly out of the primacy of matter to thought. And it is this central thesis of materialism which the pragmatists try to get around through their concept of "experience."

If we understand by "experience" not something mystical, but simply the experiences of men, i.e., our perceptions of matter in motion derived through practice, then we must of course answer that the content of experience is the external world. It is universal matter in motion existing independently of consciousness that **causes** our experiences and it is this same matter in motion that is **reflected** in our experiences.

Since Wohlforth has rejected the primacy of matter to thought, it is clear that he cannot maintain that the content of our experiences is the external world. On the contrary, for Wohlforth, like the pragmatist William James, "experience" becomes primary to being and thought. Experience is not derived from universal matter in motion and does not reflect it. Instead, experience for Wohlforth determines universal matter in motion. But "experience" is a subjective activity.

The political implications of Wohlforth's Kantian high-jinks become quite clear when he turns to the question of the labor party.

He writes:

*"We must propagandize and educate for a labor party as we have in the past. A labor party will not be created unconsciously by some automatic process out of the upheavals of the masses. The pioneer work of the Trotskyists around the labor party slogan will be a critical factor. But a labor party will not emerge out of such propaganda alone. It will come from the **experiences** of masses of workers in actual struggle against the capitalists as we at the same time participate in and seek to lead those struggles, drawing the lessons from these struggles as to the need for a labor party and*

*leads to solipsism ('Bodies are complexes or combinations of sensations') or the line of objectivism, which leads to materialism (sensations are images of objects, of the external world). (V.I. Lenin, Materialism and Empirio-Criticism, Progress Publishers, p.126.)*

Proceeding simply from the experiences of workers, taken in abstraction from the economic crisis, one can do no more than opportunistically adapt politically to the appearance, which is one-sided and lifeless, of the prevailing situation. This leads to the political dead end of impressionism, where talk about the working class not being "ready" for a labor party can always be heard.

In contrast to Wohlforth, the decisive question for Marxists is not whether this or that worker can be found who believes there should be a labor party, but rather, whether the crisis of imperialism has advanced to the state where the working class will be objectively compelled to break with the bourgeois parties.

Furthermore, the whole development of the world capitalist crisis has given the issue of the labor party enormous revolutionary significance. The present state of the crisis does not present the prospect of an extended period of reformist development in which a labor party would have a history in the United States at all comparable to the history of the Labor Party in England.

The development of a labor party is posed within the context of the building of the revolutionary party to overthrow capitalism, which is the central task before the working class. A labor party developing in the present period could be nothing else but a political organism torn by crisis and internal struggle. It would represent the opening of the floodgates for a massive movement of workers into political struggles that pose the question of power.

The pragmatic interpretation of "experience," which places thinking primary over being and thus removes from "experience" its objective source and content, invariably excludes the possibility of revolutionary struggles by the working class.

It makes a fetish of the surface appearance of the workers'

movement which in this way is devoid of contradiction and interconnection with the world crisis. It makes a great play of "the actual movement of the working class" (the "facts"), by which it means the trade unions as they are led by the bureaucrats.

Wohlforth could not begin to understand what Marx wrote in 1844:

*"It is not a question of what this or that proletarian, or even the whole proletariat, at the moment regards as its aim. It is a question of what the proletariat is, and what, in accordance with this being, it will be compelled to do. Its aim and historical action is visibly and irrevocably foreshadowed in its own life situation as well as in the whole organization of bourgeois society today."*

(Marx and Engels, *The Holy Family*, from *Collected Works*, Vol. 4, International Publishers, p.37)

For Wohlforth, the decision for a labor party rests entirely with the trade union bureaucracy. He is convinced that the "experiences" of the working class are to be guided by the bureaucracy. What Wohlforth calls "the actual movement of the working class" is nothing more than the trade unions as they are led by the bureaucrats.

It is to this movement of the bureaucracy that Wohlforth adapts himself. In the field of radical dilettantes, scratch a Kantian and you will find an apologist for the labor bureaucracy.

Finally, we must see if Wohlforth thinks there is a dialectical path of cognition from appearance to the thing-in-itself.

Dialectical materialism maintains that there is a dialectical, i.e., contradictory path connecting appearance with knowledge of the thing-in-itself.

Empiricism and Kantianism maintain that the appearance of a thing is a barrier to knowledge of the thing-in-itself. This is stated in different ways, but they all amount to the same thing. Sometimes, the empiricists maintain, following Kant, that we cannot know the thing-in-itself, but can only have knowledge of appearances. On other occasions, the empiricists deny there is a thing-in-itself behind appearance, saying that there exist only the appearances. Whatever the particular formulation,

however, all empiricists and Kantians deny the contradictory, necessary connection, transition, between appearance and the thing-in-itself.

In his *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, Lenin got right to the essence of the positions of the empiricists and Kantians.

*"What then is there in common between these two philosophers (Hume and Kant)? It is that they both in principle fence off the 'appearance' from that which appears, the perception from that which is perceived, the thing-for-us from the 'thing-in-itself'."*

Wohlforth, having identified the initial appearance of universal matter in motion with the "particular" and rejecting the dialectical connection between the universal and the particular, is led to conclude that there is an unbridgeable gap between the appearance of a thing and the "thing-in-itself." Once the practice of cognition is cut loose from the universal movement of matter, it is clear, we can only have cognition of appearances and not of the thing-in-itself. Once again, Wohlforth reveals his complete agreement with Kant, who said,

*"I ... say that things as objects of our senses existing outside of us are given, but we know nothing of what they may be in themselves, knowing only their appearances, that is, the representations which they cause in us by affecting our senses." (Immanuel Kant, Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics, Library of Liberal Arts Edition, p.36)*

That Wohlforth rejects the dialectical path of cognition is revealed in what he says about it:

*"... The Marxist moves to a higher level of abstraction to discover the place of the fact in the struggle of classes and acts accordingly to advance the class struggle and prepare for a change ..."*

Contrast Wohlforth's lifeless description of cognition as a matter of finding the right pigeonholes within which to place the facts with Lenin:

*"Cognition is the eternal, endless approximation of thought to the object. The reflection of nature in man's thought must be understood not 'lifelessly' not 'abstractly,' not devoid of movement,*

**not without contradictions, but in the eternal process of movement, the arising of contradictions and their solution.**" (V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 38, Progress Publishers, p.195)

The Marxist does not choose a different kind of cognition than anyone else. Marxism is the conscious reflection of an unconscious process. Because the "path of cognition" concentrates in itself the practice of men in society and nature, everyone, including Wohlforth, participates in it. The difference between a Marxist and everyone else is that a Marxist is conscious of the content of this process.

Once we establish that cognition (knowing, coming-to-know, reality) is a **practice**, and not an automatic process, then it becomes necessary to struggle consciously to make our thinking the instrument of the developing revolutionary force in society as it acts on nature.

The practice of cognition, for the dialectical materialist, is the motor of revolutionary practice; it is exactly what Marx fought for when he wrote that "philosophy cannot be made a reality without the abolition of the proletariat (i.e., the proletarian revolution), the proletariat cannot be abolished without philosophy being made a reality." (Marx, "Contribution to Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law," Introduction in *Marx-Engels Collected Works*, Vol. III, p. 187)

Wohlforth **separates** off thinking, the "process of cognition," as a "**mental activity**" which arranges and classifies sensations (perceptions), and does not grasp cognition as practice in the material world and thereby a reflection of objective, universal matter in motion. The Marxist, according to Wohlforth, has the key to all the proper pigeonholes within which he could "place" his facts. The unenlightened multitude on the other hand, lacks this key. This is truly a subjective and voluntarist theory of cognition.

What distinguishes dialectics from empiricism and pragmatism? Wohlforth's statement that the dialectician is distinguished from the pragmatist because the former makes generalizations from immediate appearances (i.e., to paraphrase Wohlforth, he moves to a higher level of abstrac-

tion to find the proper place for the fact) and the latter does not, is simply false.

Every pragmatist and empiricist can and does make generalizations from his immediate perceptions. In his conscious theorizing about the "process of cognition," the empiricist always talks of finding the "tendency" or "trend" indicated by a set of facts.

The "theories" concocted by the empiricists and pragmatists are always some sort of generalization from immediate appearances, such as a comparison of form and structure as it appears at a given moment.

Wohlforth, if he wishes, can find this method applied in any textbook of bourgeois social science. Bourgeois sociologists develop "theories" based on what they claim is an objective collection and classification of "social facts."

Such "theories" are useless for anticipating any new developments. They are simply a description of what appears to exist as a "trend" on the most superficial level. These "theories" must be continually modified after the event in order to "fit" a new set of facts that has come into being.

This is a theory of knowledge which is tailored to the needs of those who want to adapt to the existing reality of capitalist society and the domination of the working class by the bourgeoisie. This method of the bourgeois professors has been adopted by the revisionists in order to disarm the working class.

It is a method which denies the underlying contradictions of capitalism which create the conditions for its overthrow and, instead, rests on the unstated assumptions of bourgeois ideology — assumptions which are derived from the immediate appearance of the stability and immortality of capitalism.

In their conscious theorizing, the bourgeois professors and the revisionists always rest on the ideological mystifications generated by capitalism. The very selection of facts and the significance attached to them are always based on these unstated assumptions. Distorted and one-sided "theories" are sure to follow.

This is a self-serving, subjective method that continually dredges up "theories" and "hypotheses" whose only function is to reinforce existing prejudices.

Hegel has given us a clear explanation of the internal mechanisms of this method of subjective idealism:

"... *The trick of cognition, which takes up the data of experience one-sidedly (the only manner in which it could reach its simple definitions and formulas), and does away with refutation from experience by proposing and taking as valid experience not in its concrete totality but as example, and only in that direction which is serviceable for the hypothesis and the theory. Concrete experience being thus subordinated to the presupposed determinations, the foundation of the theory is obscured, and is exhibited only from that side which is in conformity with the theory.*" (V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 38, Progress Publishers, p. 210)

Wohlforth provides us with a fine example of this method. He makes a one-sided selection of developments in Boston as having paramount significance. Why does he pick this "particular" to the exclusion of every other? He does not choose to say. But the answer is quite clear. It provides a justification, or at least for him it seems to, of his reactionary and false assumption that the working class is racist. From this "fact" Wohlforth then generalizes the conclusion he has already found: that the working class is indeed racist.

The theory of knowledge of dialectical materialism maintains that there is a contradictory path from appearance to essence, and from essence to the Notion of objective reality.

There is no straight line path from appearance to essence, but rather a spiral development. While knowledge of the appearance provides us with a connection to essential knowledge, the essence is, at the same time, concealed by the appearance. The appearance is the **contradictory** form of essence. This, the anti-dialecticians can never understand. For them, either essence is dissolved into appearance, or else essence stands as something completely removed from appearance. The dialectical connection between essence and appearance was il-

illustrated by Marx in his discussion of commodity fetishism in *Capital*.

Marx showed that in capitalist society, men confront each other only through the mutual exchange of equivalent commodities, the products of their labor. This is the appearance of things. It is nevertheless a necessary appearance. Social relations can only be concretized in capitalist society through the form of appearance of exchange of things according to their exchange value.

At the same time, the spontaneous development of social consciousness takes these necessary appearances for the real relations. The real relationship is inverted. Men see their own social relationships as producers as relationships between non-living objects, the product of their labor. Here we see how appearance both expresses and at the same time conceals the essence of things.

Wohlforth denies the contradictory relationship between essence and appearance. That is why, like all empiricists, he dissolves essence into appearance and thus remains hypnotized by the immediate appearances.

Dialectical materialism, on the other hand, sees the path of cognition moving from appearance to essence, from essence on one level to essence on a deeper level, continually, through our practice in transforming independently existing matter in motion.

It is also noteworthy that in Wohlforth's discussion of cognition, practice never enters into his considerations. For Wohlforth, practice is something we do, it is not something, however, that is at the heart of our ability to cognize the thing-in-itself.

Wohlforth has a completely contemplative view of knowledge as a recognition of facts and generalization from facts. Wohlforth thereby repudiates a central tenet of Marxism, that practice is not something existing alongside cognition, but is in fact the starting point of cognition and intrinsic to it.

Marx made this point against contemplative philosophy in his *Second Thesis on Feuerbach*:

"The question whether objective truth can be attributed to human thinking is not a question of theory, but is a practical question. In practice man must prove the truth, i.e., the reality and power, the 'this-sidedness' of his thinking. The dispute over the reality or non-reality of thinking which is isolated from practice is a purely scholastic question."

Wohlforth, however, has repudiated Marxism as a guide to revolutionary practice. His philosophy reeks with the humility of the servant toward his master. It is a "philosophy" made to order for capitulating to the bourgeoisie.

Having examined all the idealist implications of Wohlforth's outlook, we must examine what Wohlforth hopes to achieve in his assault on dialectical materialism.

He has shown the way for ambitious individualists such as himself to free themselves from any responsibility to the working class. His is a most inventive ego, which derives mental schemas to justify his renegacy from the Marxist movement and its history. By divorcing the universal from the particular, he thinks he has freed himself from this history. He is now free to "re-interpret" the history of the movement any way that suits his factional needs, not stopping at introducing the filthiest lies.

He cannot, however, rest with freeing himself. He must become a missionary in recruiting others to the outlook of subjective idealism. This is crystal clear in what he says about pragmatism.

"Pragmatism and Marxism share a common starting point . . ." That is to say, according to Wohlforth, both Marxism and pragmatism begin with "particulars." What then is the difference between pragmatism and Marxism? Wohlforth explains this in a section we have already quoted:

*"The pragmatist moves from the facts to ameliorative action, while the Marxist moves to a higher level of abstraction to discover the place of the facts in the struggle of classes and acts accordingly to advance the class struggle . . ."*

The most striking thing about this statement is that Wohlforth has nothing to say about the relationship of pragmatism and Marxism to the fundamental question that divided

philosophy for over 2,000 years — materialism or idealism? Wohlforth wants to bury this question because he cannot admit that pragmatism is a form of subjective idealism. Pragmatism not only denies the objective existence of “contradictions,” as Wohlforth states, but above all denies the objective existence of the world, which Wohlforth “forgets.”

This simple fact about pragmatism seems to have so far escaped the attention of Wohlforth’s new collaborator, George Novack, who has written:

*“ . . . By hammering away at these bulwarks of idealist error, the pragmatists helped bring philosophy closer to reality and the results of scientific discovery.”*

It is precisely by concealing the subjective idealist foundations of pragmatism that Novack and now Wohlforth hope to pass off their own pragmatism as some form of Marxism.

Unless we recognize that pragmatism is **subjective idealism**, we cannot possibly assess what the pragmatists mean when they talk about “facts” or anything else.

Precisely here, we have the whole purpose of Wohlforth’s and Novack’s ventures into philosophy. They are nothing but adept practitioners at the art of obscurantism. Everything they write on philosophy is meant to infuse the words of Marxism with the reactionary content of subjective idealism. They do this at a moment in history when the struggle between the methods of dialectical materialism and subjective idealism will be decisive in preparing the working class for the conquest of power.

In his previous document, Wohlforth counterposed the conflict of opposites to their fundamental unity. He also denied the importance of transitions in the movement of matter.

We explained then that this involved Wohlforth in a completely idealist outlook which denied the material content of dialectics and saw the different aspects of dialectics as rigidly separated from each other, to be chosen according to the subjective needs of the individual.

We wrote:

*“Once ‘conflict of opposites’ is counterposed **absolutely** to the*

*unity of opposites, the basis of the movement of ideas in universal matter in motion is lost."*

We also noted the conclusions to which Wohlforth was led by this idealist method.

*"Wohlforth's document is completely dominated by this pragmatic method. Nowhere is he capable of questioning his own practice. In order to justify himself, he is forced into falsification and slander against the revolutionary movement. Nowhere is there any objective assessment of the economic crisis, the starting point for Marxists for any understanding of our political tasks.*

*"Political and class analysis is rejected by Wohlforth in favor of psychological speculation about the motives of this or that person in the manner of all subjective idealists. Above all, Wohlforth the individual must defend himself and his practice against the objective needs of the revolutionary movement."*

Although Wohlforth in the present article remains conspicuously silent as to how he sees the unity and conflict of opposites and the nature of transition, what he does choose to say about the universal and particular, as well as the method that permeates his entire document, shows that he not only continues, but has deepened his descent into pragmatism.

By denying the objective existence of the universal in nature, Wohlforth must deny the unity, interconnectedness, and causality that operate in nature. By divorcing thinking and perception from universal matter in motion, Wohlforth rejects the materialist basis of all cognition. Cognition therefore ceases to be a practice and becomes, as Wohlforth pointedly says, "a mental process," the subjective thinker independent of the external world.

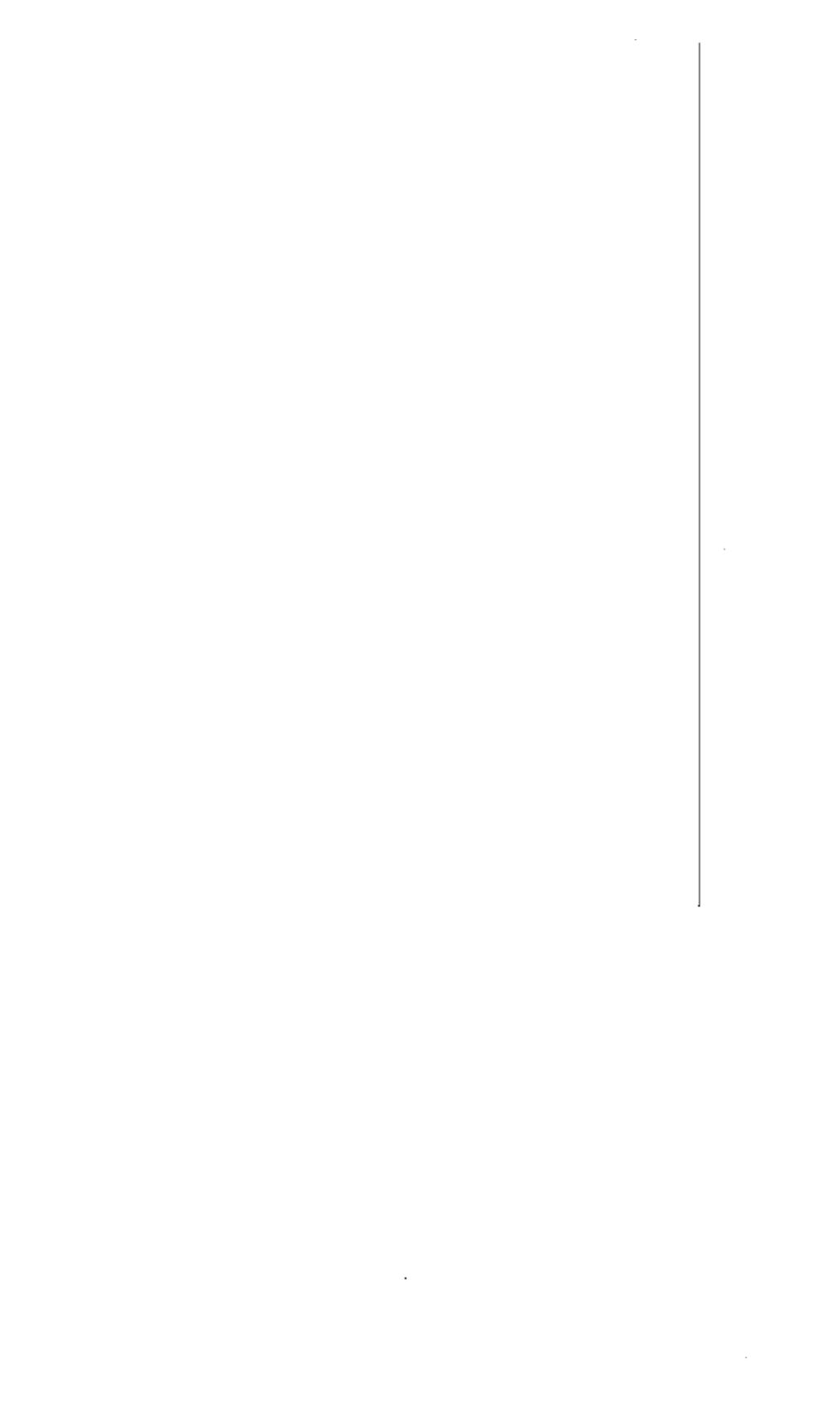
Wohlforth's denial of causality and objective necessity in nature and in thinking also involves a complete rejection of historical materialism. Society and the roles of classes are viewed completely apart from their lawful and necessary process of formation.

According to Wohlforth, the actions of the capitalist class are not determined by the objective necessity of the economic crisis, but by whether the capitalist class **thinks** it has the

strength to defeat the working class. The danger of interimperialist rivalry and war is not seen as flowing out of the historical development of imperialism, in which the capitalists' need for a world market inevitably collides against the boundaries of the nation state. Instead, Wohlforth sees the war danger postponed indefinitely into the future due to a "movement of the masses" that never reaches the point either of victory or defeat.

Wohlforth wants to view the roles of parties divorced from the historical development of classes and the roles of individuals divorced from the objective social role of parties and tendencies. This is the basis for his introduction of the slanderous charge about our "Stalinist organizational practices" and of Comrade Healy's role in particular. Wohlforth does not even attempt to give an account of any material basis for the alleged degeneration and organizational atrocities of the IC and Comrade Healy.

Not only has his method nothing to do with historical materialism, but his actual account is a pack of lies from beginning to end. Lying, however, is perfectly in line for a subjective idealist such as Wohlforth who will employ any expediency in order to justify his Menshevik hatred for the revolutionary party and its fight to prepare the working class for power.



# The Long Road Back to Pablo

Wohlforth has made the following "discovery," doubtless with the assistance of Fields and Hansen:

**"Every group in the world that claims to be Trotskyist is being tested by the requirements of the working class under new conditions of the world economic crisis. In the past, the Trotskyist movement was confined largely to a propaganda existence isolated from the broad movement of the masses by the continuing economic boom. One could, in that period, advocate all kinds of policies; but the opportunity to LIVE those policies in practice within one's own country was extremely limited. For this reason, a real sorting out of revolutionary forces could not take place."**

Having betrayed Trotskyism, this renegade thinks he is entitled to spit at its entire history. What Wohlforth seeks to deny is the historic continuity of the Trotskyist movement established by the International Committee in the course of its struggle against all varieties of revisionism.

To declare that "a real sorting out of revolutionary forces could not take place" is tantamount to renouncing the whole of the struggle waged by Trotskyism since 1938 and, in effect, is nothing less than a renunciation of the entire history of Bolshevism.

The Fourth International emerged out of the historic struggle waged by Leon Trotsky against the betrayal of the October Revolution by the Stalinist bureaucracy in the Soviet Union. It embodies and expresses the historic continuity of the Marxist movement since the period of its founders, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels.

Because of the struggle waged by the Left Opposition within the Soviet Union and then internationally, after Lenin's death until the defeat of the German working class in 1933, which signaled the collapse of the Stalinized Comintern, Trotsky was able to found the Fourth International even in the period of the greatest defeats of the working class.

Since 1938, the Fourth International has maintained this unbroken continuity through a bitter and unremitting battle against revisionism.

The essential content of all revisionism with which the Trotskyist movement has had to contend is, in the final analysis, a capitulation to the pressure of imperialism via the liquidation of the Trotskyist movement and adaptation to the reformist and Stalinist bureaucracies.

In the first days of its existence, the Fourth International was drawn into the life and death struggle against the petty bourgeois oppositionists grouped around Shachtman and Burnham in the Socialist Workers Party. Thirteen years later, in 1953, the International Committee was formed to combat what was without any question the most insidious revisionist tendency to emerge within the Fourth International — the tendency grouped around Michel Pablo.

Demoralized by the restabilization of capitalism after World War Two, impressed by the apparent strength of "monolithic" Stalinism, cynical towards the history of Trotskyism and downright contemptuous of the working class, the Pabloite forces began an out-and-out wrecking operation in the Fourth International.

Their avowed aim was to liquidate the Trotskyist movement into a mere appendage of the Stalinist parties. They rejected the revolutionary role of the working class, and instead saw revolution developing out of the impulse of the Stalinist bureaucracy. In place of the workers' political revolution against the bureaucracies in the Stalinist countries led by the Fourth International as an integral part of the world social revolution, the Pabloites invested the Stalinists with a quasi-mystical power that would be consolidated in "centuries of deformed workers states."

This revisionist grouping was decisively defeated through the struggle of the International Committee, whose leading sections included the majority of the Trotskyist forces in Great Britain, France, and the United States (where the SWP, though barred by the Voorhis Act from membership, worked in political solidarity with the IC).

The decisive character of this split was made clear in the famous *Open Letter* of the Socialist Workers Party, written by James P. Cannon and published on November 16, 1953.

He wrote:

*"This faction, centered around Pablo, is now working consciously and deliberately to disrupt, split, and break up the historically created cadres of Trotskyism in the various countries and to liquidate the Fourth International."*

Cannon concluded:

*"To sum up: The lines of cleavage between Pablo's revisionism and orthodox Trotskyism are so deep that no compromise is possible either politically or organizationally. The Pablo faction has demonstrated that it will not permit democratic decisions truly reflecting majority opinion to be reached. They demand complete submission to their criminal policy. They are determined to drive all orthodox Trotskyists out of the Fourth International or to muzzle or handcuff them."*

Notwithstanding Cannon's indictment of Pabloism, the Socialist Workers Party soon began to rebuild the bridges it had once burned. The SWP deliberately kept the International Committee in the dark about its overtures to the Pabloites and was determined to avoid all discussion of the fundamental political questions that had been raised in 1953.

The leading role in fighting for the consummation of the SWP's break with the IC and abandonment of Trotskyism was played by Joseph Hansen, who has now been unmasked by the IC as an accomplice of the GPU.

Hansen's role was to foment the most poisonous factionalism against the British comrades of the International Committee in order to cut off the political struggle within the IC.

By 1961, it was clear that the SWP was hell-bent on coming

to terms with Stalinism and dropping the struggle for the building of independent revolutionary leadership. The SWP proclaimed that the "natural Marxism" of Fidel Castro proved that a revolutionary party is not really necessary.

In 1963, the SWP carried out an unprincipled split with the International Committee and rejoined the Pabloite renegades. With this action, the SWP signed its own death certificate as a revolutionary party. It is no accident that the SWP simultaneously made its public peace with American imperialism by sending a telegram of condolences to Mrs. John F. Kennedy after her husband was killed in Dallas.

The struggle against Pabloism by the International Committee constitutes as rich a chapter in the history of Marxism as the struggle waged by Bolshevism against Menshevism between 1903 and 1917. Or, to put it more precisely, the fight against Pabloism represents the highest development of Marxism, basing itself upon all the accumulated lessons of the struggle against revisionism dating back to the great schism between Bolshevism and Menshevism at the turn of the century.

Because the International Committee carried through this fight with unflinching determination and probed the theoretical roots of the Pabloite abandonment of Marxism, there has been "a real sorting out of revolutionary forces" in the period since 1953. The International Committee "sorted out" the SWP, the OCI of France, and — whether he likes it or not — Wohlforth himself. This "sorting out" has been the preparation of the proletarian vanguard for the social revolution.

Wohlforth would like very much for history to begin anew after his resignation from the Workers League, like the Christian era after the birth of Jesus. In place of B.C. and A.D., Wohlforth would like to add after each red-letter date in the history of the Marxist movement, **B.R.** and **A.R.**, that is, **Before Resignation** and **After Resignation**. This pompous petty bourgeois probably thinks that he deserves nothing less.

It is evident that Wohlforth decided that the entire history of the struggle against revisionism is of no importance only after he resigned from the Workers League and began making his way back to Joseph Hansen.

Only weeks before his resignation, in letters to WRP General Secretary Gerry Healy, Wohlforth was insisting on the historical significance of the 1953 split.

On May 31, 1974, Wohlforth sent the following letter to Cde. Healy:

*"Dear Gerry:*

*"I have sent by separate mail a whole bundle of additional SWP educational bulletins. As you can see, they have very recently published extensive material on the 1953 split including quite a bit of correspondence.*

*"I have not had a chance yet to seriously look over the material. Perhaps there is something there which could be used in the book you are preparing. It also raises the possibility that, together with material you may have, a serious history of the 1953 split could be written. Such a history could deal with the East European discussion which preceded it as well.*

*"For ten years these people refused to discuss 1953 attacking us for insisting on such a discussion. Now they print perhaps 1,000 pages of material from the period and go through laborious 'explanations' but still refuse to have a discussion with us about it. In any event it shows that the logic of objective material developments is more powerful than the subjective wishes of these revisionists. They have done a service in publishing all this material, an act they could no longer avoid. This only proves the historic importance of the split with Pabloism brought up so sharply now that the new revolutionary situation is upon us.*

*"They have their own 'motives' of course. They seek to develop a 'history' to justify their present differences with the Mandelites and in this way prepare their own forces for a split or what is really a defacto split, and fend off what we have said for so long. But the discussion they open up goes beyond, so far beyond the petty level of the factionalists who have opened it up. The 'Open Letter' becomes for Les Evans 'a dramatic gesture' and the split only a temporary factional diversion.*

*"Anyway let me know what you think on how to approach all of this ..."*

Nor was this Wohlforth's "last word" on the subject of Pabloism. The man who today declares that in the past "one could advocate all kinds of policies" in order to belittle the

long theoretical struggle wrote another letter to Cde. Healy one week later, on June 7, 1974.

*"Dear Gerry,*

*"I have had time to read some of the material in those documents I sent you on the 1953 split. I feel the history of that period is now of the greatest importance and that this material makes it possible now to write on it more thoroughly than before. I know we wanted to develop something on this last year on the 20th anniversary. Now we have the material we needed then. (Emphasis added.)*

*"What I propose is that I write a new series just on 1953 dealing with the events which led up to the split, the split itself, and its meaning today. It would be more than a polemic with the distortions of the SWP — though every distortion would be answered fully — but — more of an attempt to educate our own cadres who know so little of this history.*

*"What comes through crystal clear in all this material is the fundamental character of the split. It is not accidental that those who stood up to Pablo were those who fought to construct parties with serious cadres turned into the working class, those who saw such work as central. For this reason I believe the 1953 split was more like that in 1903 than any of the events in the past of the Trotskyist movement. It also shared with that split much of the unclarity which required experience in the next period to clarify. But most important is the question of the party, the Leninist party, and its role in the working class. (Emphasis in the original.)*

*"Next in importance, and closely related, was the question of Stalinism. What Sam Gordon said about Stalinism turning to the right precisely because of the advance of the revolution has been proven so true in recent experience. In fact, now it seems to me that the 1961 SWP International Resolution was a very conscious and completely cynical job. Hansen actually went out of his way to include in the document the exact Pabloite formulations which the SWP had denounced in 1953. This, more than anything else, raises the question of the character of the man. The document was an open and blatant attempt to spit at the past history of the SWP" (Emphasis added.)*

Wohlforth was under no compulsion to make this assessment. He was expressing his views in a personal letter to Cde. Healy. Far from questioning the historical validity of the struggle against Pabloism, Wohlforth was anxious to undertake the

responsibility of writing a serious theoretical work on the 1953 split.

Also of considerable significance, in the light of Wohlforth's present charge that the International Committee is running a "slander campaign" against Joseph Hansen, is his own private questions about "the character of the man." On no small number of occasions Wohlforth would wonder aloud about the real political source of Hansen's destructive role in the Fourth International.

This has been answered decisively by the International Committee which has assembled irrefutable evidence that shows that Joseph Hansen, while masquerading as a Trotskyist, is in fact an accomplice of the GPU.

We will return to this later.

What is so clearly revealed by Wohlforth's letter is the totally unprincipled and despicable character of his alliance with the Pabloites. How does Wohlforth explain these letters?

There is still more. On June 14, 1974, Wohlforth wrote still another letter:

*"I want very much to write on 1953. I have now read the four IC Bulletins they have put out and am about to start on the IS stuff. The more I read the more important this work appears to me. We are now standing right on the precipice of one fantastic situation in all the countries. Italy now prepares to go like Portugal but with a far more devastating impact on all of Europe while the current trade deficit in England is fantastic. Europe is ready to go with America not far behind (!) Under these conditions, the lessons of the Pablo fight on the role of the revolutionary party, our cadres and their central role, the necessity to prepare a leadership in advance and the treacherous role of Stalinism must take on the greatest urgency. The whole long 20 year struggle was preparation for now, so all the more important to freshly assess this past period so that the new cadres can be properly educated and perhaps gain more out of it than I could at the time because of the experiences they will be participating in."* (Emphasis added.)

These three letters were written in the space of 15 days, little more than three months before Wohlforth resigned from the Workers League. They were statements and opinions which

Wohlforth volunteered to Cde. Healy. These letters contained not the slightest hint of political disagreement on any of the fundamental questions relating to the struggle of the International Committee against Pabloism.

On the contrary, Wohlforth wanted to take the lead in the polemical material being prepared by the International Committee. Just 90 days before his resignation, he was stressing "how important this work appears to me." He maintained that it "is not accidental" that the struggle against Pablo was waged by "those who fought to construct parties with serious cadres." He compared the 1953 split to that which occurred in 1903.

These were strong words, presumably reflecting conclusions which Wohlforth had drawn from more than a decade of political activity and experience.

How then, does Wohlforth explain not only his contemptuous dismissal of this entire history, but also — in the light of all his past writings — his latest verdict, that "the IC has completely collapsed."

That is, to say the least, a breathtaking display of political acrobatics. Like the man on the flying trapeze, Wohlforth dives from position to position with the greatest of ease. In June 1974, Wohlforth maintained that the continuity of the Fourth International was defended by the International Committee. He now says the International Committee "has completely collapsed."

On what historic test does Wohlforth base this assertion? What has occurred between June 1974 and the fall of 1975 to convince Wohlforth that the long struggle of the International Committee has ended with a "collapse"?

As Lenin explained, the collapse of an International "is an event of historic importance, one that calls for a most comprehensive analysis." (V.I. Lenin, *The Collapse of the Second International*, Progress Publishers, p. 4)

The great historic test of the Second International, to which it proved unequal, was the outbreak of the First World War.

On August 4, 1914, the German Social Democracy, the largest and most important of all the parties of the Second In-

ternational, voted war credits in the Reichstag to finance the imperialist war of the German bourgeoisie. The French Social Democracy did the same, and one of its greatest leaders, Jules Guesde, entered the bourgeois government.

Lenin, on the basis of this historic betrayal of the working class, proclaimed that August 4 signified the death of the Second International. He wrote:

*"To sum up.*

*"The collapse of the Second International has been most strikingly expressed in the flagrant betrayal of their convictions and of the solemn Stuttgart and Basle resolutions (against imperialist war) by the majority of the official Social Democratic parties of Europe. This collapse, however, which signifies the complete victory of opportunism, the transformation of the Social-Democratic parties into national Liberal-Labour parties, is merely the result of the entire historical epoch of the Second International — the close of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. The objective conditions of this epoch — transitional from the consummation of West-European bourgeois and national revolutions to the beginning of socialist revolutions — engendered and fostered opportunism . . . The crisis created by the great war has torn away all coverings, swept away conventions, exposed an abscess that has long come to a head, and revealed opportunism in its true role of ally of the bourgeoisie. The complete organizational severance of this element from the workers' parties has become imperative."*  
(*Ibid.*, pp. 50-51)

Trotsky proclaimed the collapse, the "August 4," of the Third International, on the basis of the great historic test of the struggle against fascism in Germany. The disastrous policies of the Comintern led to the greatest defeat in the history of the German working class, the coming to power of Hitler in January 1933.

The decision of the Comintern to declare its approval of the policies which had produced the German disaster was the historical proof that the Third International, under its Stalinist leadership, was utterly bankrupt as a revolutionary party. It was impossible for the Left Opposition to continue its role as a faction of the Third International. The Comintern was dead. It

was necessary to proceed with the building of the Fourth International.

As Trotsky wrote in the *Transitional Program*:

*"The Fourth International has already arisen out of great events: the greatest defeats of the proletariat in history. The cause for these defeats is to be found in the degeneration and perfidy of the old leadership. The class struggle does not tolerate an interruption. The Third International, following the Second, is dead for purposes of revolution. Long Live the Fourth International!"* (p. 54)

Now, from what great historic event does Wohlforth deduce the "collapse" of the International Committee of the Fourth International?

Wohlforth does not say, but the answer is clear enough.

On August 31, 1974, the Central Committee of the Workers League voted unanimously, Wohlforth and Nancy Fields concurring, to remove Wohlforth from the position of national secretary and to suspend Fields.

As far as Wohlforth is concerned, that decision doomed the International Committee as decisively as the First World War doomed the Second International and the crushing of the German proletariat doomed the Third International.

For an event of such historical magnitude, it certainly attracted negligible attention at the time. It apparently took even Wohlforth, who voted for his own removal, time to notice the passing of a great historical milestone. He did not announce his disagreements with the proceedings of the Central Committee until he wrote his letter of resignation on September 29, 1974.

Here we have the method of the arrogant petty bourgeois whose political positions are determined above all by his own subjective considerations. Matters of history and principles must wait in line before personal preoccupations with prestige and career. On Wohlforth's scale, his removal from the position of national secretary weighs more heavily than the great historic issues confronting the working class.

As far as Wohlforth is concerned, the IC "collapsed" because it stepped on his toes.

And the Pabloite revisionists — whom he had publicly op-

posed for more than a decade — rose in his estimation like Lazarus from the dead after Hansen dragged Wohlforth from out of the dregs and gave him a freshly soiled suit to wear.

As we stated earlier, to deny the historical significance of the struggle against Pabloism on the grounds that “a real sorting out of revolutionary forces could not take place” in the earlier period is, in fact, to reject the entire history of the ideological struggle waged by Marxists against revisionism.

The theoretical struggle is always, in the last analysis, a reflection of the class struggle. Definite objective class interests are expressed in each political tendency. The Pablos and Wohlforths of this world cannot be understood properly as individuals “with ideas of their own,” but as the representatives of whole layers, certain class forces, in society.

Pabloism expressed the capitulation of petty bourgeois strata within the workers movement beneath the pressure of world imperialism under conditions of the restabilization of European capitalism.

Within the United States, the fever of capitulation to Stalinism which swept through the Socialist Workers Party in the early 1950s infected primarily the old trade union cadres who had been corrupted by the post-war boom.

The crude pragmatism of the SWP leadership which led it down the Pabloite path despite the earlier split in 1953 was the expression of ideological domination of the bourgeoisie within the movement, which eventually led to the SWP's break with the International Committee, with Trotskyism, and the historic task of fighting for the social revolution.

The struggle against revisionism cannot be turned on and off like a faucet, nor can history be picked up and dropped depending on the “circumstances.”

The International Committee does not hand out general amnesties to revisionist groupings on the basis that all can be forgiven and forgotten.

Rather, we proceed from all the lessons gleaned from the entire history of the struggle against revisionism and Stalinism which is the framework within which the historic selection of

the revolutionary vanguard takes place.

The revolutionary party is not the product of improvisation and clever combinations.

Bolshevism did not emerge in 1917, but in 1903. Without the long theoretical struggle against Menshevism conducted by Lenin, there could have been no revolutionary party in 1917 to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat. The "sorting out" of revolutionary parties did not begin in Petrograd in 1917, but at the Second Conference of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party held in London in 1903.

This was explained clearly by Lenin:

*"As a current of political thought and as a political party, Bolshevism has existed since 1903. Only the history of Bolshevism during the entire period of its existence can satisfactorily explain why it has been able to build up and maintain, under most difficult conditions, the iron discipline needed for the victory of the proletariat . . ." (V.I. Lenin, *Left-Wing Communism, An Infantile Disorder*, Progress Publishers, p. 8)*

The historic significance of the theoretical struggle against Menshevism was emphasized no less sharply by Lenin in *The Collapse of the Second International*, a work whose study is vital for an understanding of the fight against revisionism.

*"In Russia, the complete severance of the revolutionary Social-Democratic proletarian elements from the petty bourgeois opportunist elements has been prepared by the entire history of the working class movement. Those who disregard that history, and by declaiming against 'factionalism,' make themselves incapable of understanding the real process of the formation of a proletarian party in Russia, which has developed in the course of many years of struggle against various varieties of opportunism, are rendering that movement the worst possible service. Of all the 'Great' Powers engaged in the present war, Russia is the only one that recently experienced a revolution. The bourgeois content of that revolution, in which the proletariat nevertheless played a decisive part, could not but cause a split between the bourgeois and proletarian trends in the working class movement. In the approximately twenty years (1894-1914) that Russian Social-Democracy has existed as an organization linked with the mass working class movement (and not*

only as an ideological trend, as in 1883-1894), there was a struggle between the proletarian-revolutionary trends and the petty bourgeois, opportunist trends. The Economism of 1894-1902 was undoubtedly a trend of the latter kind . . . (Emphasis added.)

"The 'Menshevism' of the next period (1903-1908) was the direct successor, both ideological and organizational, to Economism. During the Russian revolution, it pursued tactics that objectively meant the dependence of the proletariat upon the liberal bourgeoisie, and expressed petty bourgeois, opportunist trends. When, in the ensuing period (1908-1914), the mainstream of the Menshevik trend produced liquidationism, the class significance of that trend became so apparent that the best representatives of Menshevism were continually protesting against the policy of the 'Nasha Zarya' group. It is that very group — the only one which, during the past five or six years, has conducted systematic work among the masses in **opposition** to the revolutionary Marxist party of the working class — that has proved to be **social-chauvinist** in the war of 1914-15 . . .

"All their history has prepared the working class and the workers' Social-Democratic Party of Russia for 'internationalist' tactics, i.e., such that are truly revolutionary and consistently revolutionary." (Ibid., pp. 52-53)

The whole history of the International Committee has been the preparation for the world socialist revolution. The whole development of Marxism in the struggle against revisionism has laid the granite foundation for building mass parties throughout the world.

In 1953, the International Committee was formed to defeat the pro-Stalinist and liquidationist grouping led by Michel Pablo and his Sancho Panza, Ernest Mandel.

The bankruptcy of the Pabloite conception of revolution emerging from a bureaucratic impulse, coupled with an implicit rejection of the revolutionary role of the working class, was rapidly exposed by explosions which ripped the Stalinist bureaucracies throughout Eastern Europe.

Trotsky's assessment of the doomed nature of the Stalinist bureaucratic caste was totally vindicated by the events of the anti-Stalinist East German uprising in 1953, the Polish crisis in

1956 and the Krushchev revelations and Hungarian Revolution in 1956.

These developments were a crushing refutation of the Pabloite perspective of centuries of deformed workers' states. Furthermore, they revealed more clearly that the struggle against Pabloism within the Fourth International was the reflection of the development of a new revolutionary crisis in which the world Trotskyist movement would be posed with the task of smashing Stalinism and leading the working class internationally in the overthrow and destruction of capitalism.

The reactionary implications of the Pabloite opportunism and abandonment of Trotskyism became even more clear in Mandel's betrayal of the Belgian General Strike and — of even greater historical significance — the 1964 decision of the Pabloite leadership of the LSSP in Ceylon to join the bourgeois coalition government of Madame Bandaranaike.

It could no longer be seriously denied that Pabloism was a tendency which represented the class pressures exerted by world imperialism to undermine the Trotskyist movement from within and make it nothing more than a left whisper of the counterrevolutionary Stalinist bureaucracy.

As early as 1957, the SWP began making overtures to the Pabloites and by 1961, it was advancing blatant revisionist positions.

The SWP began speaking of a "New World Reality" in which the industrial working class in the metropolitan capitalist countries was written off as a revolutionary force and middle class adventurers like Fidel Castro were hailed as "natural Marxists."

The SWP began propagating the myth that a socialist revolution had been consummated in Cuba in order to defend the proposition that the working class could come to power with the "blunted instrument" of Castro or of nationalists like Ben Bella in Algeria.

This meant that the SWP had rejected the necessity of constructing revolutionary parties of the Fourth International as the historically required leadership of the working class. It meant in practice a capitulation before the Stalinist

bureaucracies and the petty bourgeois nationalist agents of American imperialism.

The SWP blocked all discussion of the significance of the 1953 split in order to carry through an unprincipled reunification with the European Pabloites in 1963, forming the bogus United Secretariat. The class significance of this reunification became immediately clear when the SWP sent a telegram of condolences to Mrs. Kennedy after the assassination in Dallas.

In 1964, the complicity of the SWP with the betrayal of the LSSP Pabloites was made clear when it expelled a number of members, (including Wohlforth) for insisting on a discussion of the role of Pabloism in Ceylon.

The high priest of the unprincipled reunification was none other than Joseph Hansen, whose attack on the International Committee was coupled with a shameless defense of pragmatism, the ideology of the American imperialist bourgeoisie.

The determination of the the International Committee to take the theoretical lessons of the 1963 split into the practice of constructing the revolutionary party brought it into conflict with the OCI, the French movement whose leading members had originally stood against Pabloism in 1953.

The gains of the International Committee in the development of dialectical materialism as the theory of knowledge of Marxism proved central in the development of cadres through the positing of living perception derived by the party in practice upon its previously developed abstract knowledge. This dialectical unity and conflict of theory and practice, through which the party deepens its knowledge of the objective processes of the class struggle as part of the universal movement of matter, is the Marxist antithesis of the pragmatic defense of the program in the name of "orthodoxy."

The categorical opposition of the OCI to the consideration of Marxism as the theory of knowledge reflected its own degeneration into the camp of petty bourgeois centrism, thinly masked with a hollow verbal defense of the *Transitional Program*.

The OCI publicly split with the International Committee at the Essen Youth Conference in 1971 by voting with centrists against an IC resolution which declared that the training of youth in the method of dialectical materialism is central to the construction of revolutionary parties.

One month later, in August 1971, the OCI consummated its betrayal of Trotskyism by rushing to the support of the centrist Lora and endorsing the treacherous policies which had led to the disarming of the Bolivian working class in the face of the Banzer coup d'etat.

This long history of struggle, in which the renegecy of Wohlforth constitutes one of the latest chapters, has laid the unshakeable foundations for mass Trotskyist parties all over the world. While the Pabloite movement presents a pathetic spectacle of degeneration, confusion, and liquidation, the International Committee has marched from strength to strength.

Now, after 20 years of struggle against Pabloism — a period of unparalleled experience for Trotskyists in the construction of the world party of the social revolution, a period from which Trotskyism emerges with greater strength than ever, a period of enormous development of Marxist theory against the schools of subjective idealist philosophy — Wohlforth comes along and says: "It all doesn't mean a thing because Nancy and I have found new careers with the kind assistance of Joseph Hansen."

In 1972, more than two years before Wohlforth deserted the Workers League, he wrote:

*"The actual history of the Fourth International is a rich history of the necessary struggle to realize the program of the Fourth International in the working class under exceptionally difficult circumstances. That development succeeded in the sense that we now enter a new period of class struggle with its tremendous potential for socialist revolution with — the Fourth International! It hasn't been destroyed.*

*"It stands of the basis of a rich history of experience accumulated in a period when theoretical development could only progress at such a painfully slow rate that at times it was almost unnoticeable. But precisely because of this certain lessons have been*

*learned very well indeed — and we have no intention of discarding them.*

*“The Fourth International KNOWS the petty bourgeoisie. It has decades of experience with this class and its methods of thinking, its habits of life, its moods and its impressions. The Fourth International KNOWS opportunism and sectarianism. It has had a rich and extremely bitter experience with every possible variety of charlatan. This experience will be put to good use now that the working class movement opens up the possibility of a very serious theoretical development. (Wohlforth, *In Defense of Trotskyism: An Answer to Those Who Vilify Our History*, Labor Publications, pp. 10-11)*

You said it, Wohlforth! We know the petty bourgeoisie and we know you: your politics, your methods, your impressions, and, as for your “habits of life,” we know about them too — but for the sake of propriety, we will say as little as possible about them.

The historical record speaks for itself. It cannot be rewritten at the whim of every insulted petty bourgeois windbag.

To Wohlforth’s feeble lies we counterpose hard facts.

The holding of the International Youth Assembly last November in London, attended by youth from 17 countries, is in itself a devastating answer to those like Wohlforth who charge that the IC has “collapsed.”

We can say, paraphrasing Trotsky, in reference to the SWP, the OCI, and all Pabloite groupings:

*“The great events that rush upon mankind will not leave of these outlived organizations one stone upon another. Only the International Committee of the Fourth International looks with confidence to the future.”*



# Reform or Revolution

Behind Wohlforth's pathetic outbursts against the International Committee is not simply his disagreement on the issue of security.

If Wohlforth could not live with the decisions made by the Workers League to defend the security of the movement — decisions for which he himself had voted — if Wohlforth raised such a howl when the Workers League Central Committee acted in accordance with the most fundamental principles of Bolshevism, it meant that he had far ranging disagreements on all the basic questions of perspectives and party building.

The clearest sign of Wohlforth's complete break with revolutionary Marxism is his attack on the Manifesto of the Sixth Congress of the International Committee.

In one fell swoop, Wohlforth rejects the entire Leninist conception of the epoch, as well as the principal task posed to the working class by the historic crisis of imperialism.

He is horrified by the declaration of the International Committee that the fundamental responsibility of the revolutionary vanguard is the preparation for power through the building of the party.

Wohlforth quotes the following passages from the IC Manifesto:

*"What is now at issue, in all the capitalist countries, is the outbreak of mass struggles in which the first responsibility is the actual preparation by the working class for the taking of state power.*

*"Not a single burning problem of the working class in Britain, the United States, or any other country, can be resolved outside the preparation of the struggle for state power.*

*"Every elementary demand of the working class, every defense of past gains, every attempt of the capitalist state to control the trade*

*unions, brings forward the two great necessities for the working class: the preparation of the conquest of state power and the building of the revolutionary party to lead this struggle for power."*

Wohlforth then remarks:

*"That this is no passing fit on the part of Healy is illustrated by an article on Portugal by Alex Steiner in the August 12 'Bulletin, which criticizes the SWP for denying 'that the working class internationally is faced with the struggle for power as an immediate practical task.'*

*"Well, Comrades Healy and Steiner, you can add us to the list of those who deny that the task today internationally is the 'immediate practical task' of the struggle for power!"*

Wohlforth need not worry! We took his name off the list of revolutionary Marxists when he deserted the Workers League because he placed his relationship with Miss Fields above the interests of the working class.

And as for "passing fits," that is perhaps how he explains his 13-year collaboration with the International Committee when the question is raised by GPU accomplice Joseph Hansen.

On our part, the question of power is raised on the basis of the world historic assessment of the capitalist crisis made by Lenin and Trotsky in the period after 1914 and the October Revolution, and the entire development of the economic crisis on a world scale in the present period.

The Manifesto proceeded from the highest development in the class struggle, the historic victories of the workers and peasants of Vietnam and Cambodia over American imperialism.

The IC declared that the triumph of the Indochinese revolutions (culminating later in 1975 with the victory of the Pathet Lao) marked a turning point in the class struggle on an international scale.

Victory in Indochina was achieved because of the advanced stage of the world crisis of capitalism, which now creates the objective conditions for unity in revolutionary struggle of the peasant and working masses of the former colonial countries and the proletariat of the advanced capitalist countries.

The decisive objective factor in the victory of the Vietnamese Revolution was the rapid development of the world economic crisis which led, in late 1974, to the definite outbreak of the slump in all the advanced countries, combined with rampaging inflation.

The slump signified the ignominious collapse of the Keynesian economic measures through which the imperialists have sought to hold back the working class in the advanced countries with the assistance of the Stalinist bureaucracies.

We stand completely with the assessment made in the IC Manifesto:

*"The victories in Vietnam and Cambodia open up an inexorable process of revolutionary struggles internationally. These revolutionary struggles, under the leadership of the Fourth International, sections of the IC, will create entirely new conditions and set an example for the workers of the Soviet Union and the deformed workers' states to carry forward the political revolution against the Stalinist bureaucracy and take their rightful place in the vanguard of the international proletariat.*

*"The full unity of the world revolution today is the most powerful vindication of Trotsky's struggle against the counterrevolutionary results of the politics of 'socialism in one country' . . .*

*"Trotsky was killed by Stalin's assassin, but the work of Trotsky not only lives, it now achieves its fulfillment."*

In opposition to the perspective of the International Committee, Wohlforth states:

*"It is of course true to say that today in general all struggles of the working class pose the necessity for workers to come to power in the future because the crisis of capitalism allows for no lasting reforms and propels the capitalists themselves into ever sharper attacks on the working class. It is quite another thing to state the question of power as an immediate task. With Healy, abstract demagogy replaces concrete appraisals and appropriate policies."*

That such stupidity could be penned in 1975 and then palmed off as "International Perspectives" is a testimony to the bankruptcy of revisionism.

Wohlforth has exhumed the stinking corpse of pre-World

War One social democracy and put it — as well as his ignorance — on display.

To say that it is “of course true” that struggles “in general” raise the question of power only at some time “in the future” is to in fact propose a conception of the epoch entirely at variance with that put forward by Lenin and Trotsky.

Wohlforth is actually saying that while, “of course,” power will some day be a question that may merit some attention, it has no relevance to the present state of affairs.

Knowing that he is walking on thin ice, Wohlforth employs the cheapest of debater’s tricks and suddenly attributes to the International Committee the position that the “immediate practical task” is the “seizure of power.”

It is clear enough from the Manifesto that the IC spoke of the “preparation for power,” not the “seizure of power.”

Wohlforth deliberately introduces this confusion because he holds an out-and-out reformist position. He opposes the chief task of the revolutionary party to prepare for power — without which there can be no “seizure of power” when the historic opportunity arises.

Let it of course be understood that the **preparation for power** and the **seizure of power** are dialectically related; and knowledge of the relationship between the two constitutes the touchstone of the conscious practice of the revolutionary party.

The elucidation of this relationship was the major theoretical conquest of the first four congresses of the Communist International. Lenin and Trotsky were able to make brilliant contributions on this question and demolish the reformist dogmas of the Second International on the basis of the historic experiences of the development of Bolshevism and the October Revolution.

The essence of Wohlforth’s dismissal of the task of preparing for power is the rejection of the conception of the epoch and the tasks of Marxist parties fought for by Lenin and Trotsky in the period of these congresses.

Wohlforth harkens back to the sterile dogmatists of the Second International who never concerned themselves with the fundamental question of the **strategy for power**. They lived

with the day to day tactics of political life, always honoring in words the ultimate goal of power. Like Wohlforth, they lived in the peaceful twilight of "general" struggles which pointed to power "in the future."

But between the "general" struggles and the "future," these old men of the Second International saw generations of slow and organic development. The eruption of World War One in 1914 was the death blow to the Second International.

Trotsky explained this historical development of the Marxist movement:

*"The basic principles of revolutionary strategy were naturally formulated since the time when Marxism first put before the revolutionary parties of the proletariat the task of the conquest of power on the basis of the class struggle. The First International, however, succeeded in formulating these principles, properly speaking, only theoretically and could test them only partially in the experience of the various countries. The epoch of the Second International led to methods and views, according to which, in the notorious expression of Bernstein, 'the movement is everything, the ultimate goal nothing.' In other words, the strategical task disappeared, becoming dissolved in the day-to-day 'movement' with its partial tactics devoted to the problems of the day. Only the Third International reestablished the rights of the revolutionary strategy of communism and completely subordinated the tactical methods to it. Thanks to the invaluable experience of the first two Internationals, upon whose shoulders the Third rests, thanks to the revolutionary character of the present epoch and the colossal historic experience of the October Revolution, the strategy of the Third International immediately attained a full-blooded militancy and widest historical scope." (Trotsky, *The Third International After Lenin*, New Park Publications, pp. 57-58)*

The writings of Trotsky are an inexhaustible source of ammunition against the reformist drivel advanced by Wohlforth.

*"The present epoch is directly contrary in character to the past epoch. Opened by the war, and in particular by the Russian October Revolution, it reveals itself as the epoch of the direct struggle of the proletariat for power on a world scale." (Trotsky, *First Five Years of the Communist International*, New Park Publications, Vol. 1, p. 21)*

In another address, delivered to the Fourth World Congress of the Communist International, Trotsky examined the contrast between the Platonic adherence to the conquest of power characteristic of the old Second International and the practical living way this had to be approached by revolutionaries:

*"The chief task of every revolutionary party is the conquest of power. To use the philosophical terminology of idealism, in the Second International this task was regarded as merely a 'regulative idea,' which means an idea having little relation to practice.*

*"It is only within the last few years that we have been learning on an international scale to make the conquest of power a practical revolutionary aim. The Russian Revolution aided in this. The fact that we in Russia can name a definite date — October 25 (November 7), 1917 — on which the Communist Party, leading the working class, wrested political power from the hands of the bourgeoisie proves more decisively than any arguments that the conquest of power is not a 'regulative idea' for revolutionists but a practical plan." (Ibid, p. 220)*

In sneering at the IC Manifesto for its insistence on the central task being the "preparation for power," Wohlforth shows that he cannot grasp the most fundamental proposition of Trotskyism: that is, the decisive role of revolutionary leadership.

Trotsky continually emphasized the historic change represented by World War One because the objective transformation of capitalism into a social system in its death agony now placed the greatest weight on the question of conscious leadership in the working class.

In contradistinction to the pre-1914 period, which was marked by a steady and progressive development of the productive forces under capitalism, the World War signaled the breakup of capitalism.

The decisive feature of the epoch is not, as Wohlforth maintains, that "the crisis of capitalism allows for no lasting reforms," but that it poses the destruction of the productive forces, starkly raises the alternative of socialism or barbarism, and places before the working class the task of conquering power.

When Wohlforth talks of “no lasting reforms” or a struggle for power “in the future,” he is guilty of a crass deception of the working class as to the actual character of the period. He is back to the old social democratic distinction between the **minimum program** and the **maximum program**, that is, the “realistic” tactics for day to day work versus the abstract “ultimate” goal of taking power in the generation of our grandchildren.

Isn't Wohlforth really saying — when he speaks of “no lasting reforms” — that it is still possible for the working class to improve its living conditions through the partial half-measures of reformism — albeit, not forever.

The deliberate confusion which Wohlforth attempts to introduce, which we pointed out earlier, between the **preparation for power** and the **seizure of power** is not simply the product of his inveterate dishonesty. It is, more importantly, an expression of his hopeless entanglement in reformist schemas, in which every stage is separated by concrete walls.

On the basis of the historic assessment of the epoch, we state unequivocally that only the party which prepares for power will seize power. The preparation for power must permeate the everyday work of the party.

It is only in this way that a truly revolutionary cadre can be assembled, educated, and prepared for the titanic class battles that will culminate in the seizure of power by the working class, the dictatorship of the proletariat, and the destruction of the bourgeois state.

Trotsky wrote in his brilliant document “Strategy and Tactics in the Imperialist Epoch”:

*“The revolutionary character of the epoch does not lie in that it permits the accomplishment of the revolution, that is, the seizure of power at every given moment. Its revolutionary character consists in profound and sharp fluctuations and abrupt and frequent transitions from an immediately revolutionary situation, in other words, such as enables the communist party to strive for power, to a victory of the Fascist and semi-Fascist counterrevolution, and from the latter to a provisional regime of the golden mean (the ‘Left bloc,’ the inclusion of the social democracy into the coalition, the passage*

of power to MacDonald, and so forth), immediately thereafter to force the antagonisms to a head again and acutely raise the question of power . . .

*"This is the sole source from which flows the full significance of revolutionary strategy in contradistinction to tactics. Thence also flows the new significance of the party and the party leadership."* (*Third International After Lenin*, New Park Publications, pp. 62-63)

The real thrust of Wohlforth's attack on the IC for posing as the central responsibility of its sections the "preparation for power" is his opposition to the building of revolutionary leadership.

The question which arises here is the relationship between the objective and subjective factors. The fundamental premise for the social revolution is the objective stagnation and breakup of the productive forces within the framework of capitalist social relations.

The objective expression of this crisis today is the worldwide growth of unemployment, the decline in world trade, and the continuing decline and stagnation in production in the major industrialized countries.

But, as Trotsky wrote, "a revolutionary situation does not fall from the sky." It emerges out of the struggle of classes in which the subjective factor, the revolutionary party, becomes at a certain point the decisive factor in the development of a revolutionary situation.

*"In a period of growing capitalism, even the best party leadership could do no more than only accelerate the formation of a workers' party. Inversely, mistakes of the leadership could retard this process. The objective prerequisites of a proletarian revolution matured but slowly, and the work of the party retained a preparatory character.*

*"Today, on the contrary, every new sharp change in the political situation to the Left places the decision in the hands of the revolutionary party. Should it miss the critical situation, the latter veers around to its opposite. Under these circumstances, the role of the party leadership acquires exceptional importance. The words of Lenin to the effect that two or three days can decide the fate of the*

*international revolution would have been almost incomprehensible in the epoch of the Second International. In our epoch, on the contrary, these words have too often been confirmed and, with the exception of October, always from the negative side. Only out of these general conditions does that exceptional position become understandable which the Comintern and its leadership occupy with respect to the whole mechanics of the present historical epoch."*  
(*Ibid.*, p. 63)

There is another aspect of Wohlforth's "international perspectives" that must be touched upon. Today, he denounces the International Committee for its insistence that the task before its sections is the preparation for power.

He proposes, as we have pointed out, a completely social democratic conception which puts off the question of power until some undetermined future epoch.

This is not the least astonishing of the political somersaults Wohlforth has performed since he slinked out of the Workers League in 1974.

Those familiar with his political biography or his writings before September 1974 will recall that Wohlforth advanced a perspective in those days which suggested that the American revolution was just around the corner.

The International Committee continuously had to take Wohlforth to task for his wildly impressionist approach to the development of the economic crisis, in which he predicted a series of spectacular political "leaps" in which revolutionary developments in the United States would overtake those in Europe, or, at the very least, occur simultaneously.

This led Wohlforth to abandon any serious and sustained campaign in the trade union movement on the question of the labor party, and to completely ignore the task of patiently assembling and training Marxist cadres in the trade unions and among the youth.

The February 1973 letter of Michael Banda (on behalf of the IC) to Wohlforth was just one of the many attempts of the International Committee to encourage a more serious approach on the part of Wohlforth to political and economic developments in the United States.

The IC repeatedly warned Wohlforth of the dangerous disorientation that his mechanical lumping together of developments in the United States and Europe could introduce.

Banda wrote:

*"To conceive of developments in the US as proceeding only by 'leaps' is wrong and dangerously so. There will not only be 'leaps' but plenty of hard, unspectacular slogging against the Stalinists and revisionists which will require great theoretical firmness and tactical skill . . . The task is to organize and win over the vanguard of the working class to Trotskyism and lay the basis for the revolutionary party."*

But Wohlforth was not deterred. The man who now declares that it is wrong to speak of the preparation for power wrote in the 1974 "Perspectives for the American Revolution":

*"We repeat — we are no longer in the period of the preparation for revolution. We have now entered the period of the revolution itself."*

Mark this well. Just two years ago, Wohlforth maintained that it was **too late** to speak of preparing for revolution because the revolution had already started.

Wohlforth's "perspectives," which excludes both the preparation for power by the party and the revolution itself, is summed up in the following paragraph:

*"The actual state of affairs in the world is far different from the simplistic and schematic dreams of Healy. World capitalism is today in its deepest crisis, a crisis the capitalists can resolve only through a massive defeat of the working class internationally. But they are unable at this point to make any progress toward such a defeat. It is precisely the great strength of the world working class that at each point deepens the crisis and the internal contradictions of the capitalist system."*

Bravo! Wohlforth has broken new ground. In place of the permanent revolution, Wohlforth has formulated the theory of the permanent standstill. An immovable force has met an irresistible object. The capitalists are in crisis, but cannot do very much about it. And so, the class struggle goes on forever

like a handwrestle between two evenly matched opponents.

This is a theory of complacency, but certainly not revolutionary action.

In the first instance, Wohlforth reveals a shocking ignorance of the real dialectic of the class struggle. Isn't it the sheerest nonsense to say in one breath that the capitalists can resolve their crisis only by defeating the working class, then in the next breath say that they are unable to do this and thus finally conclude that nothing will happen, except that the crisis will "deepen."

The twentieth century has given examples of both revolutions and counterrevolutions. In Russia, with the leadership of the Bolshevik Party, the working class took the power. In Germany, without Bolshevik leadership, the working class missed revolutionary opportunities and the fascists took power and smashed the labor movement.

In Chile, the working class was betrayed by Allende and the Stalinists. The result was not a standstill, but a brutal counter-revolutionary coup in which the Pinochet regime came to power.

In Wohlforth's theory, there is the stench of the Stalinist position that the "strength" of the working class has compelled the capitalists to recognize the uselessness of their reactionary policies and thus has brought to the fore "progressive" politicians who favor detente with the Soviet Union.

This is the significance of Wohlforth's fleeting reference to the deepening "internal contradictions of the capitalist class."

Wohlforth arrives at this preposterous position because he denies the central role of the revolutionary party. This is his common ground with the Pabloite revisionists. He thus falls into the trap of glorifying the "strength" of the working class as a property existing independently of the struggle of the revolutionary party.

With this position, Wohlforth walks in the muddy footsteps of all revisionists who stand on the "spontaneity" of the working class against the conscious development of revolutionary leadership.

The "strength" of the working class cannot be analyzed independent of its level of **consciousness**. It is only from this standpoint that the importance of the revolutionary party can be understood. Naturally, opportunists of all stripes fidget nervously when the issue is posed in this manner.

All those who begin with some abstract conception of the "strength" of the working class independent of the party inevitably deny that the fundamental task before the working class is the resolution of the crisis of revolutionary leadership.

Before long, they are proposing the liquidation of the revolutionary party in favor of petty bourgeois radicalism, Stalinism, and all manner of "blunted instruments."

And they eventually start running as fast as they can to put the greatest distance possible between themselves and the revolutionary party. Then, it is only a matter of time before they resurface in revisionist circles and start shrieking about "sectarianism."

This is the standard curse to be laid upon all those who continue the fight for the building of the revolutionary party.

Trotsky wrote: "The political relationship of forces is determined not solely by the objective factors (the role in the productive process, numerical strength, etc.) but by **subjective factors: the consciousness of strength** is the most important element of **actual strength**." (Trotsky, *Whither France*, New Park Publications, p. 97)

The working class arrives at this consciousness through the struggle of the revolutionary party, which embodies its entire historic experience and posits upon this all the developments of the class struggle.

The working class is strengthened in so far as the revolutionary party wages war against all revisionist forces which reflect the pressure of imperialism within the proletariat.

The smashing of these forces is the highest point in the preparation of the working class for power.

Thus, when the Workers League unmasked Wohlforth and cauterized this festering sore within its movement, the American working class was immensely strengthened.

## *A Subjective Idealist on War*

The logic of Wohlforth's subjective idealist method leads inevitably to a denial of the laws of historical materialism.

The study of society from the standpoint of the dialectical laws of universal matter in motion is replaced with an eclectic hodge-podge of impressions where the motives of men are seen as independent of the historical class forces which they reflect.

The old Marxist axiom of freedom being the conscious understanding of necessity is done away with, and the guiding motto of the subjective idealist is: "Freedom is doing anything I feel like."

It precludes a scientific understanding of the class struggle and, flowing from this, a conscious struggle directed toward the construction of revolutionary leadership and the destruction of capitalism.

What all subjectivists cannot abide is precisely the insistence of Marxists that the construction of the revolutionary party and the struggle for power are tasks posed objectively to the working class by the whole development of society and the world economic crisis.

Denying the historical implications of the world crisis in this immediate period, these subjective idealist politics are aimed at disorienting and disarming the working class in the face of the enormous danger raised by the crisis.

A clear example of this in the politics of Wohlforth is his strenuous objection to the following statement contained in the International Committee Manifesto:

*"The blind alley of capitalism's crisis drives the imperialists inevitably towards the launching of World War Three."*

According to Wohlforth, "This position of the IC expresses the tremendous lack of confidence in the working class that distinguishes Healy and all ultra-lefts. It expresses a petty bourgeois hostility to and distance from the working class which they see as simply being pushed around, stepped upon, and dominated by the imperialists and would-be fascists."

What Wohlforth challenges here is nothing less than a basic proposition of the Marxist movement since the turn of the century. Even the social democrats of the Second International warned in 1912 in the famous Basle Manifesto that imperialism inevitably seeks the way out of its blind alley through war.

Of course, it remained for Lenin and Trotsky to draw from this indisputable truth the full revolutionary implications. Lenin, thus, characterized this epoch as one of wars and revolutions.

This conception was elaborated in the brilliant contributions Trotsky made during the first four Congresses of the Third International and later in the period of his struggle against Stalinism. In the document "War and the Fourth International," written in 1934, five years before the outbreak of World War Two, Trotsky wrote:

*"The same causes, inseparable from modern capitalism, that brought about the last imperialist war have now reached infinitely greater tension than in the middle of 1914. The fear of the consequences of a new war is the only factor that fetters the will of imperialism. But the efficacy of this brake is limited. The stress of inner contradictions pushes one country after another on the road to fascism, which, in its turn, cannot maintain power except by preparing international explosions. All governments fear war. But none of the governments has any freedom of choice. Without a proletarian revolution, a new world war is inevitable."* (Trotsky, *Writings, 1933-34*, Pathfinder Press, p. 300)

Perhaps Wohlforth, on the advice of Miss Fields, is ready to

brand Trotsky as a petty bourgeois coward who lacked confidence in the working class. We are entirely uninterested in his final decision, for the question of war does not hinge on "confidence" in the working class, but rather on the insoluble contradictions of the capitalist system that develop in accordance with the dialectical laws of matter in continuous motion.

We are, as Marxists, interested in laws of historical development. They are not altered by "confidence" or other inspiring emotions. A man who drank poison against the advice of his doctors because he has "confidence" in his stomach would rightly be considered an idiot. An individual who disregards the danger of war because he has "confidence" in the working class is simply not a Marxist, but rather a fool with opinions on questions he knows nothing about.

The only context within which the question of "confidence" has any significance whatsoever is when Marxists, who are fighting to construct the revolutionary party, proceed with the scientific knowledge that the working class with the historically required leadership will be able to prevent war by overthrowing capitalism.

The International Committee, in this scientific sense, is absolutely confident that the working class will defeat imperialism. We are confident because we are building the party that will destroy world imperialism. We proceed from the standpoint of Trotsky, who concluded the 1934 document with the following words: **"The struggle against war means now the struggle for the Fourth International."** (*Ibid.*, p. 329)

Wohlforth's snivelling concern over our alleged lack of "confidence" is little more than a thin mask for his own repudiation of the historic task of building revolutionary leadership in the working class.

What Wohlforth calls a lack of confidence is simply our refusal to passively separate the objective tasks posed to the working class by the development of the crisis from the struggle of the Workers League to build the revolutionary party. As Trotsky said many times, the party is the historically necessary

agency through which the working class fulfills its historic mission to overthrow capitalism.

As a renegade, Wohlforth of course rejects this responsibility. He would rather blow soap-bubbles and compose melodic ditties about "confidence" than confront the responsibility of building the revolutionary party. This is why he ran away from the Workers League as soon as his feelings were hurt. All this talk about "confidence" is nothing more than the opportunist's rejection of the need for the revolutionary party.

What could be more obvious a rejection of the struggle for revolutionary leadership than the following remarks by Wohlforth?

*"The IC misses the main point of the Vietnam victory. It expresses the great weakness of the capitalists in carrying out their interests through war. It is above all the movement of the masses that holds back the trigger finger of the imperialists."*

Thus, in the wonderful world of Wohlforth, the struggle against war is not a revolutionary task because the problem has been solved all by itself. Wohlforth can enjoy the sleep of the truly confident because the masses are holding back the trigger finger of imperialism and — this takes the cake — the capitalists are too weak to do a thing about it. Furthermore, the capitalists have since wised up to the fact that war is a bad way of carrying out their interests.

One is almost forced to run one's eyes twice when reading this hodge-podge of Pabloite stupidity. Everything here is a complete muddle and an outrageous distortion of Marxism.

Wohlforth arrives at the truly astonishing conclusion that the capitalists, having discovered their "great weakness" will now abstain from war like the righteous from sin.

As every Marxist knows, a world war is not the product of the strength of capitalism, but rather of its death agony. World War One was the historic proof of the total bankruptcy of capitalism. From 1914 on, history poses to humanity the stark alternative: socialism or barbarism. The danger of war and the destruction of all civilization is raised because capitalism has

exhausted the possibility for any further progressive development.

For the capitalists, this is not a matter of choice. The bourgeoisie cannot choose its historical destiny from a variety of alternatives.

We repeat the words of Trotsky: "All governments fear war. But none of the governments has any freedom of choice."

Is still more evidence required? Let us cite the *Transitional Program*:

*"The bourgeoisie itself sees no way out. In countries where it has already been forced to stake its last upon the card of fascism, it now toboggans with closed eyes toward an economic and military catastrophe ... Under the increasing tension of capitalist disintegration, imperialist antagonisms reach an impasse at the height of which separate clashes and bloody local disturbances (Ethiopia, Spain, the Far East, Central Europe) must inevitably coalesce into a conflagration of world dimensions. The bourgeoisie, of course, is aware of the mortal danger to its domination represented by a new war. But that class is now immeasurably less capable of averting war than on the eve of 1914."* (Trotsky, *The Transitional Program*, Labor Publications, p. 8)

Wohlforth's dismissal of the war danger as one arising from the breakup of world capitalism recalls the notorious conclusion of Pabloite Ernest Mandel, who, when writing on the danger of fascism, declared: "Europe's big bourgeoisie has once already burned its finger severely with a fascist experiment. In some parts of the continent, as a result, it lost everything it had; in others, it was only able to salvage its class domination at the last minute. It is all the less likely to be led to repeat the adventure, since the experience also left deep traces among the masses of the people, and the sudden rising threat of a new fascism would certainly bring the sharpest reactions." (Introduction to *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*, Pathfinder Press, pp. 37-38)

With such impressionistic chattering about "burnt fingers," one departs entirely from historical materialism and descends to the level of ahistorical banality.

Having denied the objective roots of war, Wohlforth offers a vulgar rehash of the old Stalinist deception that mass pressure can stop the war plans of the imperialists. To say that the "movement of the masses . . . holds back the trigger finger of the imperialists" is to simply sow illusions that play into the hands of the ruling class.

War cannot be prevented except through the overthrow of capitalism. Wohlforth says nothing about this. But it is not an accidental omission. Wohlforth and his friends in the SWP have made a deal with the labor bureaucracy. They will do everything in their power to keep the working class tied to the bureaucrats, who are the agents of imperialism.

Instead of a struggle to break the labor movement from the imperialist politicians of the two-party system, the SWP and the Stalinists will campaign for mass pressure on the imperialist "trigger finger," while leaving the gun in the hand of the capitalists.

Glorification of the mass movement and avoidance of the question of revolutionary leadership is the classic dodge of opportunism. This was explained succinctly by Trotsky:

*"Opportunism, which consciously or unconsciously thrives upon the inspiration of the past epoch, always tends to underestimate the role of the subjective factor, that is, the importance of the party and of revolutionary leadership . . . In all these cases, as well as in others of lesser importance, the opportunistic tendency evinced itself in the adoption of a course that relied solely upon the 'masses' and therefore completely scorned the question of the 'tops' of the revolutionary leadership. Such an attitude, which is false in general, operates with positively fatal effect in the imperialist epoch."* (Trotsky, *Strategy and Tactics*, New Park Publications, pp. 11-12)

Objecting to the International Committee's absolutely correct warning about the dangers of a new imperialist war, Wohlforth also says the following: "The older cadres of the Fourth International, and the younger ones who have studied its history, will say: 'Burnt once is enough. We have no intention of being burnt twice!' It was Michel Pablo who told the Fourth International in 1950 that war-revolution was imminent.

On this basis, he sought to avoid the laborious process of winning and building Trotskyist cadres in that difficult period by looking for other forces to do the job. He became convinced that a section of Stalinists could be transformed into revolutionary instruments under the pressure of the masses in this 'new reality'."

It takes the most brazen cynicism for Wohlforth, a refugee from the revolutionary movement, to lecture the International Committee on Pabloism. Naturally, Wohlforth introduces the issue via a lie, a cheap and transparent lie at that. Out of the blue, Wohlforth decides to tamper with the text of the IC Manifesto and denounce it for something it never said. Anyone who reads the Manifesto will find that the IC never spoke of "war-revolution." This is the invention of Wohlforth.

When the International Committee warns that the danger of war arises out of the insoluble contradictions of world imperialism, it is basing itself on Lenin. The Leninist conception of this epoch as one of wars and revolutions has absolutely nothing in common with the Pabloite notion of war-revolution.

Wohlforth, of course, knows this. He is familiar with the history of the struggle against Pabloism. The International Committee rejected the "theory" of war-revolution, which held that an imminent world war between the workers' states and American imperialism would assume the character of a global civil war in which the Stalinist bureaucracies would be compelled by mass pressure to carry out revolutionary policies. The result would be centuries of deformed workers' states. The essence of this quixotic revisionist notion was capitulation to the pressures of imperialism in the European labor movement and abandonment of the historic task of the Fourth International.

What makes Wohlforth's allusion to the Pabloites so grotesque is that he is once again back in their dung heap. He is now a member of the Socialist Workers Party, which reunited on an unprincipled basis with the Pabloites in 1963 to form the renegade United Secretariat. Wohlforth is now the henchman of Joseph Hansen, who was the principal architect of the reunification with the Pabloites. Has Wohlforth perhaps

forgotten that it was Hansen who engineered the former's expulsion from the SWP in 1964 because Wohlforth supported the International Committee against the reunification? Perhaps we can refresh his memory.

In June 1962, Hansen made the following attack on Wohlforth in a report to the SWP Plenum:

*"Let me turn now to the other half of this ambiguous bloc — Comrade Wohlforth. I have become convinced that he does not really have a serious concern for theory ... If theory were Comrade Wohlforth's primary interest and concern, he would either now remain silent because he felt that the test of events, while damaging his position, was still inconclusive; or if he felt that enough results were now in, he would have attempted a justification or self-criticism in the light of what has happened in the past year.*

*"Instead, he changed the subject and kept talking. In place of 'The Cuban Revolution and the Lessons of 1962,' he wants us to get embroiled over the topic of 'Pabloism and the Lessons of 1953' as if this question in the history of Trotskyism has become the most burning question facing our movement today.*

*"What does this reflect if not a shift in concern? A shift away from basic theory to the field of political organization? Comrade Wohlforth became interested in putting together a group to support the position of the SLL. And he carried this out with a quietness befitting the modesty of the task. But the exigencies of current SLL policies require subordination of discussion on the Cuban Revolution and its meaning. SLL policies at the moment require strong stress on the dangers of 'Pabloism' and the possibility that 'Pabloism' and 'Cannonism' are really synonymous." (Slaughter, ed. *Trotskyism Versus Revisionism*, New Park Publications, Vol. III, pp. 285-286)*

Perhaps Wohlforth will recall that Hansen went on to dismiss all discussion of Pabloism as 'adolescent nonsense.' (*Ibid.*, p. 287)

Has Wohlforth recently discussed with Hansen the dangers of burning his fingers on Pabloism? Or has Wohlforth bowed deeply and finally made the self-criticism that Hansen suggested he make 14 years ago? As the saying goes, those who come late to Jesus come hardest.

# **The Boston Stranglers of the Working Class**

Wohlforth's rejection of the task of preparing for power and his crude subjective idealist attack on Marxism lead him inexorably to grovel on his belly before the bourgeois state and turn viciously against the working class.

**This is the essential political significance of Wohlforth's hysterical fascination with developments in Boston.**

Having torn the particular out of its universal interconnections, Wohlforth is determined to find a particular to take the place of the universal. This particular is Boston. As if in honor of the bourgeoisie's bicentennial celebration, Boston becomes for Wohlforth the center of the universe.

Though 1975 was the year of the victory of the Indochinese revolution, the deepening of the world slump, and unprecedented political crisis in every advanced capitalist country, it is Boston which completely preoccupies Wohlforth.

This is not surprising. Boston has become the mecca of middle class radicals looking for an excuse to express their hatred for the working class. The racial turmoil in Boston is attributed by Wohlforth not to the rotten living conditions created by capitalism, but to the working class itself.

He constructs a completely subjective interpretation of events in Boston which leads to the most reactionary conclusions: that the American working class is racist, that unions are "job trusts for white workers," and that federal troops must be used to protect blacks from the assaults of this racist working class.

Wohlforth is completely caught up in the petty bourgeois frenzy orchestrated by the SWP around the issue of busing in

Boston. A random sampling of *Militant* headlines in the closing months of 1975 and early 1976 would give the uninformed observer the impression that Boston today resembles Nuremberg in 1938.

- August 8 — “New Lynch Mob Terror in Boston”
- September 5 — “Blacks Say: Halt Racist Violence!”
- September 19 — “Action Needed to Stop Racist Mobs”
- October 24 — “Anti-Racist Coalition Calls Nat’l Actions”
- December 19 — “Boston Racists Firebomb NAACP”
- February 6 — “New Racist Terror in Boston”
- February 20 — “Boston: New Wave of Racist Violence”
- February 27 — “Antibusing Terror Spreads in Boston — Federal Troops Needed to Defend Black Rights!”

For Wohlforth and the SWP, the issue of Boston is not just a matter of political disorientation. It is the most naked expression of their alliance with the most reactionary forces of the capitalist state against the working class.

The SWP can claim the notoriety of having the most consistent record of advocacy and support for the bourgeois state and its repressive institutions throughout the course of the events in Boston. It not only supports the police in Boston, but it has gone to the length of demanding the occupation of South Boston by federal troops and the imposition of martial law.

Its position on Boston represents a qualitative deepening of the degeneration of revisionism. It is the culmination of a long process of adaptation to the bourgeois state.

1. In 1957 the SWP called for the use of troops in Little Rock.

2. In 1963, Farrell Dobbs sent a message of condolences to the widow of the imperialist assassin John Kennedy.

3. In 1964, the SWP expelled Wohlforth and others for insisting on a discussion of the historic betrayal of the Ceylonese Pabloties, who had just entered the capitalist coalition government of Mrs. Bandaranaike.

4. In 1969, the SWP’s British co-thinkers, the atrociously

misnamed "International Marxist Group," supported the introduction of troops into Ulster on the grounds that they would protect Catholic workers.

The Socialist Workers Party's appeal for troops provides precisely the pretext the bourgeoisie seeks to experiment with the use of the armed forces against the American working class. Under conditions of crisis, the ruling class is impelled to step up its preparations for the use of military and paramilitary force within its own country.

As in Ulster, the use of troops in Boston would be designed not to protect the democratic rights of black youth and older workers, but to intimidate and suppress the rights of all workers.

The most astonishing thing about Wohlforth's comments on Boston is that he does not mention once that the main demand advanced by the SWP in its Boston campaign is the demand for federal troops.

He writes:

*"Here we had a critically important struggle necessary to the political development of the working class. It could not be sidestepped. We could not act as if racism did not exist and did not have a grip on a whole layer of white workers. We could not bend to these prejudices, hoping to perhaps 'unite' workers by ignoring the racism which does exist.*

*"Only a head-on confrontation with that racism in action, in actual practice, could win over the Black workers and youth to socialism and lay a basis to reach the older white workers as they pass through the bitter experiences of the capitalist class's attacks on them as well."*

Wohlforth goes on:

*"The fight against racial discrimination was a democratic demand, which workers parties had not only to support, but fight to lead. This is exactly what the SWP did do. It turned its entire forces sharply into this battle, developed a mass base of support for this campaign and participated in two marches of over 15,000 each in Boston."*

Why doesn't Wohlforth mention that this "head-on confron-

tation with racism" and "fight against racial discrimination" was centered on the demand for federal troops?

Blaming the working class for racism and in complete agreement with the SWP's call for troops, Wohlforth is also at the forefront of the demands for direct attacks on the trade unions.

He now states his opposition to the seniority system and advances the proposition that under conditions of economic crisis, white workers should make sacrifices for black workers.

He goes so far as to support the use of the courts and the law to break up the seniority system and to supervise the trade unions. Wohlforth writes:

*"The laws and court decisions that force these unions to set up various minority hiring programs were of extreme importance in this context."*

Wohlforth no longer stands for full employment. He no longer believes that the working class as a whole must be mobilized against the capitalist state, against attacks on jobs and living standards and against assaults on the trade unions.

The question of socialist policies to defend the working class, of the nationalization of the banks and basic industry under workers' control, of the struggle for working class power — this does not interest Wohlforth in the slightest.

No, the friend of Joseph Hansen is into courts and federal troops.

Wohlforth accepts mass unemployment. He writes: "Of course, we fight first of all for **no layoffs** and for a shorter work week as part of our transitional program."

Of course. However, Wohlforth is a "practical" man who is always prepared to be reasonable.

*"But we must insist that in those cases where we lose on the no layoff demand, any layoffs that do occur maintain the proportion of women and minority workers. Only such a fight can lay the basis for bringing together the movement of the minorities with that of the unions in a struggle against the capitalist class."*

He adds:

*"The WL's defense of seniority under these conditions is a racist defense of all that is backward in the American labor movement."*

Wohlforth is, of course, far more enlightened than the Workers League. Layoffs cannot be fought and union gains simply should be abolished. This leads to another "common sense" proposal: the courts should establish quotas to regulate mass layoffs according to race.

These are the policies of a man who has not only broken with Marxism, but has also passed into the camp of the enemy class. What Wohlforth reflects is the right-wing movement of the most reactionary layers of the middle class, who are driven into a frenzy by the economic crisis and place the blame for it on the working class.

What gives Wohlforth's anti-union diatribe a certain element of perversity is that he has, in the past, written extensively against the very positions he now advances.

In *Black Nationalism and Marxist Theory*, written in 1969, Wohlforth wrote quite sharply on the reactionary implications of advancing special demands for blacks apart from the struggle to unite the working class around socialist policies.

*"This leads it to adopt what is in reality a very reactionary demand — the demand, not for equality, but for preferential treatment of Negroes.*

*"This takes two forms in its immediate program — the demand for preferential hiring of Negroes in industry and the demand for preferential admissions of Negroes to universities.*

*"The concept behind these demands — which by the way originate in bourgeois university and foundation studies and have been pushed by the government for some time — is that since the Negro has suffered a special oppression for centuries, for the Negro to achieve real equality today he needs an edge to counteract this oppression.*

*"However, the problem is that the white worker — for whose job the Negro is to be given preference — is not responsible for the past and present oppression of the Negro but it is these white workers who are asked to make the sacrifice.*

*"Such a program can only be justified on two grounds: (1) the acceptance of the presently available number of jobs and promotion*

possibilities as sacred and unchangeable, and (2) a theory that Negro oppression is the result of whites as such, not the capitalist system.

"Needless to say such preferential demands only deepen racism among white workers and few workers can be dissuaded from this with moralistic 'fight racism' campaigns.

"The Wallaceites tell the white worker that the Negro threatens to take his job away and the radicals come along and agree with the Wallaceites, urging the white worker to 'fight racism' by giving up his job or promotion to aid the Negro.

"What is lacking completely, as we pointed out in the teachers question, is a common struggle against capitalism to demand more jobs, more promotions, and more training programs for all workers regardless of race so that the advancement of the Negro will not mean the unemployment or demotion of a white worker.

"Only this kind of struggle can unite the working class as a whole in a battle to bring socialist consciousness to the class.

"This is an extremely vital issue today when the world capitalist crisis means increased unemployment in the United States, making the fight for jobs take on a transitional character, raising the question of power — of socialism or capitalism.

"Much the same can be said about preferential admissions policies in the university. The need is not for unlimited admission of 'Third World students,' but a free university education for all working class youth.

"Progressive Labor, like the SWP and all so-called radical groups in the United States, approaches the Negro question completely abstracted from the international crisis.

"In fact, they have no conception at all of this crisis. They note the movement of the Negro people, but they cannot objectively root this movement in the deepening capitalist crisis." (Wohlforth, *Black Nationalism and Marxist Theory*, Labor Publications, 1970, p.21)

This extended quotation alone should be sufficient to expose the shameless charlatany of Wohlforth's endorsement of the SWP's reactionary "anti-racism" campaign in Boston.

But there is much more. Wohlforth today waxes enthusiastic about the SWP's alliance with the NAACP. He writes: The Workers League declared that the collaboration of the SWP

with the NAACP represented a terrible betrayal! We see it as a principled and necessary step in winning over new militants in the workers movement and in actual struggle."

Wohlforth must be kidding. The NAACP leadership has functioned for decades as a willing tool of imperialism. These black middle class liberals spend most of their time hustling votes for the Democratic Party and defending the "American way of life" against communism.

Perhaps Wohlforth has similar hopes for an organization with a similar history: CORE, led by Roy Innis, which has just been involved in a CIA-sponsored project to raise a force of American black mercenaries for combat against the MPLA in Angola.

Wohlforth also "reminds" the Workers League and comrade Fred Mazelis of the WL Central Committee "that in the late 1950s, when he together with Tim Wohlforth was in the leadership of the YSA, the YSA carried out just such a policy with the NAACP, CORE, and other groups in the fight to build Northern support for the Southern sit-in struggle."

In case Wohlforth has forgotten, the SWP and the YSA had to fight the anticommunist NAACP every step of the way during the civil rights struggles of the late 1950s. Mazelis and other YSA members then were viciously rebaited by the same NAACP figures who today embrace the SWP traitors.

In 1969, Wohlforth made a thorough assessment of the history of the SWP's participation in the nationalist and civil rights movement. He was scathing in his attack on the reformist nature of its intervention.

*"There are, of course, many demands — democratic ones, minor trade union issues — which Marxists actively support.*

*"But what differentiates the Marxists from the reformists is not simply the 'militancy' with which we fight for this or that partial demand, but rather that such demands are integrated into a revolutionary strategy, the center of which is the political struggle for transitional demands.*

*"George Breitman's open espousal of reformism has a history to it, for Breitman has played a very important role in the political degeneration of the SWP.*

*"This history will help us see how closely linked the position of the SWP on the black question is to the general evolution of not only the SWP, but its international co-thinkers toward open reformism."*

Reviewing the past, he wrote:

*"Just as the SWP today adapts to the black nationalists, so then they adapted to Martin Luther King's movement."*

But Wohlforth took the SWP to task most sharply for ... having supported the use of federal troops in the South.

*"Flowing from this reformist perspective, Breitman's next contribution to the development of the SWP's political program was the advocacy of sending federal troops to the South to force school desegregation.*

*"It was only shortly after the SWP adopted this position that federal troops were used — in Detroit to shoot down black rebels in the uprising there ...*

*"But this position, which the SWP has quietly shelved for the moment (and which Wohlforth today supports — DN & AS) shows the actual logic of reformism — to turn the masses towards reliance on the capitalist state which oppresses them.*

*"Rather than raising transitional demands, such as defense guards for the Negro people, the SWP urged the Negro people to look to the capitalist state for 'protection'." (Ibid, pp. 33-34)*

What is involved in Wohlforth's amazing political about-face on the issue of Boston — like every other facet of his renegacy from the Fourth International — is his total rejection of the whole historical conception of the epoch fought for by Lenin and Trotsky and, flowing from this, of the social revolution itself.

His denial of the universality of matter in motion as the starting point of all knowledge is the theoretical source of his denial of internationalism and his ill-fated attempt to work out a uniquely American perspective for the American working class, disregarding the development of the world economy and the interests of the world socialist revolution.

The upshot of Wohlforth's nationalist experiment is to ally himself with the middle class against the workers, advance

reformist demands for one section of the workers against the interests of the working class as a whole, preach the acceptance of the capitalist system provided white workers get laid off first, and, finally, endorse the use of federal troops to police the working class.

The grotesque conclusion that Wohlforth arrives at out of his attempt to deduce an American perspective from a purely nationalist position is that the socialist revolution is not posed in the United States.

He advances the following outlandish interpretation of history:

*"We must understand the basic problem of the development of the American working class determined by the past of American capitalism. Because of the existence up to the American Civil War of a slave system in the South and the inability of the capitalist class, following the Civil War, to fully resolve the democratic tasks posed by that revolutionary war, the American working class is deeply divided on race lines . . .*

*"The political and social development of the American working class cannot proceed without a head-on confrontation with this problem — in many ways the central problem of the third American revolution."*

If one is to advance the proposition that the bourgeois democratic revolution was not completed in the United States, then one is faced with the immediate task of completely revising the entire Marxist conception of this historical epoch. If Wohlforth's formulation is to be accepted, the issue of the social revolution in the United States and internationally must be taken off the historical agenda for the twentieth century.

For, if one takes at all seriously the language of Marxism, the completion of the bourgeois democratic revolution would mean that the tasks of consolidating the nation state, freeing the agrarian laborers from the land, and eliminating the last vestiges of feudalism still remain ahead.

In relation to the blacks, it would leave open the possibility that they remain an oppressed nationality which must conduct a historically legitimate struggle for the establishment of an independent nation.

Finally, it would mean that the full development of the productive forces of capitalism on the North American continent could not be fulfilled until these bourgeois democratic tasks were accomplished.

If this thesis is to be accepted, what remains standing of the whole assessment made by the Comintern — of which Trotsky's contributions are the crowning theoretical achievements — of the dominant role of American imperialism and the international revolutionary implications of the relationship between Europe and America?

Unfortunately for Wohlforth, his entire theory is complete rubbish. In no country in the world were the tasks of the bourgeois democratic revolution completed as thoroughly as they were in the United States. The revolution led by the colonial merchants and planters in 1776 established the national independence of the United States and the bloody Civil War shattered the slave system completely and created the historical conditions for the massive growth of capital through the unhampered development of industry in the continental United States.

The transformation of the United States economically between 1865 and 1890 was unprecedented in previous history and laid the basis for the emergence of the United States as the premier imperialist power.

Politically, the point of denying these obvious facts is to deny the necessity for the building of the revolutionary party for the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of socialism. Instead, aping the Stalinists, it is possible to preach the importance of "democratic" struggles to be fought for in alliance with layers of the bourgeoisie and middle class in a popular front.

All this will not come as news to Wohlforth. Everything written above, he has in the past explained: "The American Civil War marked the completion of the American bourgeois democratic revolution and the emergence of a strong nation state with a powerful and integrated national economy." (*Ibid.*, p. 12)

Even when one takes into account the "recent national and

world events" which led Wohlforth back into the Socialist Workers Party, Wohlforth still has to explain how bourgeois democratic revolutions completed in 1865 become uncompleted in 1975.

Having with a stroke of his pen changed the course of world history, Wohlforth discovers yet another barrier to the social revolution. That is racism. As a subjectivist who denies that being determines consciousness, Wohlforth insists that this is the "central problem" of the third American revolution. (It should be noted that Wohlforth does not state "social revolution.")

In other words, racist thinking is not seen as a product of the decay of capitalism whose crisis drives the working class as an objective force in history toward the social revolution. Rather, racism becomes Wohlforth's version of original sin which has a power over the working class more powerful than the objective historical forces.

This is just another version of all the demoralized arguments found commonly among radicals and layers of the middle class who reject the struggle for socialism on the grounds that workers are "stupid" and man inherently evil.

Wohlforth has found a home with precisely these degenerate and politically bankrupt elements.



## An Aging Liar Peddles His Wares

Like so many other middle class scoundrels whose "careers" and "ambitions" and "brilliant possibilities" have been thwarted by the principled procedures of the revolutionary party, the embittered Mr. Wohlforth now resorts to the old made-to-order slanders.

He announces that the International Committee is guilty of "Stalinist Organizational Practices."

The accusation is not original with Wohlforth. Since the 1930s, petty bourgeois renegades have regularly defended their capitulation to Stalinism or imperialism by charging the Fourth International with "Stalinist" practices.

By "Stalinism," these renegades do not at all mean the anti-Leninist practices of the Soviet bureaucracy, whose origins lie in the specific historic conditions of the post-1917 period which led to the degeneration of the Bolshevik Party.

Their conception of Stalinism has nothing in common with that developed by Trotsky in the course of his long struggle against the Soviet bureaucracy. After all, these renegades are entirely uninterested in the historical issues upon which the Trotskyist movement was founded.

What they are interested in is **themselves**. And thus to each renegade the term Stalinism has an intensely personal meaning.

But, generally speaking, the petty bourgeois renegade decides that the party is "Stalinist" the moment he learns that it will not allow him to stand in the way of the historic interests of the working class and the social revolution.

Then, once he has recovered from the shock, the renegade starts shouting up and down the street about "Stalinist" prac-

tices because he knows that there is always an anti-communist market for his slanders.

The denunciation of "organizational practices" is the hallmark of revisionism. Renegades commonly denounce Trotskyists for "Stalinist" practices in the same way as the Mensheviks after 1903 denounced Lenin's organizational practices as "Blanquism" or "Jacobinism."

What unites all these epithets is the hatred of those who use them for any revolutionary discipline and organizational loyalty based on great political principles.

On many occasions, Trotsky was forced to take up a battle against these cowardly anti-communist tendencies. In 1929, just after being forcibly exiled to Turkey, he answered the Wohlforths of that day, who whined about discipline and centralism:

*"The party regime has no independent, self-sufficient meaning. In relation to party policy, it is a derivative magnitude. The most heterogeneous elements sympathize with the struggle against Stalinist bureaucratism ... For a Marxist, democracy within a party or within a country is not an abstraction. Democracy is always conditioned by the struggle of living forces. By bureaucratism, the opportunist elements in part and as a whole understand revolutionary centralism. Obviously, they cannot be our co-thinkers. A semblance of solidarity stems here from ideological confusion or most frequently from malicious speculation." (Trotsky, Writings 1929, Pathfinder Press, p. 81)*

The Socialist Workers Party had plenty of experience with this Wohlforth type of element in the period of the 1940 split. The main charge of the petty bourgeois minority against the Cannon leadership was that it engaged in "Stalinist organizational practices."

Cannon characterized the method of this degenerate element in a particularly memorable passage in *The Struggle For A Proletarian Party*:

*"The petty bourgeois intellectual, who wants to teach and guide the labor movement without participating in it, feels only loose ties to the party and is always full of 'grievances' against it. The*

*moment his toes are stepped on, or he is rebuffed, he forgets all about the interests of the movement and remembers only that his feelings have been hurt; the revolution may be important, but the wounded vanity of the petty bourgeois intellectual is more important. He is all for discipline when he is laying down the law to others, but as soon as he finds himself in a minority, he begins to deliver ultimatums and threats of a split to the party majority."* (Pathfinder Press, p. 15)

Wohlforth to a "T." Except that Wohlforth first slinked out of the party before revealing that he had differences with the party majority — which, by the way, consisted of the entire membership except him and his girlfriend.

No, Wohlforth is not original. But he is certainly more grotesque than most in his apparently limitless capacity to lie. And this section of his "document" is without any question one of the foulest pieces of political pornography ever produced.

Naturally, Wohlforth never explains why he never objected to our "Stalinist Organizational Practices" during his long association with the International Committee.

Today he writes:

*"The SLL-WRP has existed from 1960, when the Behan group was expelled, until the fall of 1974, without a tendency life, dissident internal documents, pre-convention and convention struggles. Such a situation, unique in the history of our movement, did not mean differences did not exist in the party. They were suppressed."*

But, Mr. Wohlforth, permit us a question. During those very years you collaborated with the International Committee. But there is absolutely no record that you ever objected to the practices of the Socialist Labour League (precursor of the WRP) or the International Committee.

You never objected to the expulsion of Behan in 1960 after he had publicly attacked the SLL and then broke entirely with Trotskyism.

In your many letters to the British comrades, you never once even hinted that you disagreed with the methods of the SLL leadership. Nor could you. For the very simple reason that the organizational practices of the IC and its sections are based on

the principles of democratic centralism.

Wohlforth claims that factional groupings did not emerge in the SLL because differences within the party were "suppressed." As usual, Wohlforth offers no evidence to support this statement. He is lying and he knows it.

Furthermore, the charge is obviously absurd. Factions cannot be suppressed. They are, in fact, encouraged in their development under conditions in which there is a suppression of differences.

The absence of factions in the Socialist Labour League reflected the policy of the leadership to bring all disagreements within the party into the open. The party is a unity within which the conflict of opposites in their interpenetration and transformation develops. The "holding fast" of opposites united in their conflict is the dialectical materialist method of cadre training.

In opportunist circles, factionalism is a way of life because a lack of principled policies on the part of the leadership is traditionally combined with petty bureaucratic methods of political midgets. Wohlforth, for one, never outgrew the factional training he acquired in the Shachtmanite school of the 1950s.

How, then, did Wohlforth discover that the IC became "Stalinist"? In Wohlforth's inimitable words, "This is what has happened:"

*"1. The purge of the Workers League leadership. The growth of the Workers League in the 1971 to 1974 period created a serious challenge to Healy. The League had an indigenous leadership, a significant press and apparatus, and support among minority youth. This posed to Healy the problem of how to maintain the subordination of the Workers League leadership to him personally."*

We are glad that Wohlforth has chosen to raise the matter of the so-called "purge of the Workers League leadership" because it provides an excellent opportunity to clean the air of his lies once and for all.

Let us present Wohlforth's latest version of this "purge." He writes:

*"In late August of 1974 Healy made the outlandish charge that Nancy Fields, a leading party figure, had CIA connections because a relative of hers once worked for the CIA. He then insisted that Tim Wohlforth, national secretary of the WL, support him in moves against Fields. Fields was suspended from the party and Wohlforth removed as national secretary at a hysterical session of the Central Committee held in the middle of the night at a party camp in Canada.*

*"The action was taken without any prior investigation of the so-called charges, and when such an investigation did take place, the charges were declared unfounded. But the leadership was nonetheless basically changed and the movement held more than ever under the thumb of Healy."*

This is a pathetic piece of nonsense from beginning to end.

There was nothing "outlandish" or "hysterical" about the Central Committee meeting of August 31, 1974. On that day, the CC learned for the first time that Wohlforth had deliberately concealed from the Workers League and the International Committee the fact that Nancy Fields had been raised and financially supported by her uncle Albert Morris, a leading figure in the CIA.

In the unanimous opinion of the Central Committee, Wohlforth had committed a gross violation of discipline and security. Furthermore, the Central Committee unanimously decided that Fields would have to be suspended until an objective investigation could determine the precise nature of her CIA connections.

Contrary to Wohlforth's present claim, the inquiry voted for by the Central Committee never found the charges raised on August 31 "unfounded." Quite the opposite.

The IC Commission of Inquiry stated:

*"We found that TW did withhold information vital to the security of the IC and its 1974 conference. When asked directly, in the presence of three witnesses, on August 18, 1974, in London about the possibility of any CIA connections of NF, he deliberately withheld the facts, thus placing his own individual judgment before the requirements of the movement. He later stated that he did know of these connections, but did not consider it important to say so.*

*"The inquiry established that from the age of 12 until the completion of her university education, NF was brought up, educated and financially supported by her aunt and uncle, Albert and Gigs Morris. Albert Morris is the head of the CIA's IBM computer operation in Washington, as well as being a large stockholder in IBM. He was a member of the OSS, forerunner of the CIA, and worked in Poland as an agent of imperialism. During the 1960s, a frequent house guest at their home in Maine was Richard Helms, ex-director of the CIA and now US Ambassador in Iran."*

Wohlforth sought to sabotage the work of the commission by resigning only days before it was to begin its work. Nancy Fields left with him without even writing a letter of resignation or offering a verbal explanation.

If the actions of the IC and the Workers League CC constituted a "purge," would Wohlforth please explain why not one member of the Workers League either supported him or joined him when he resigned?

Just the opposite happened. The Workers League was besieged by dozens of devoted comrades who had been driven out of the party by Wohlforth and Fields and were anxious to rejoin.

To this day, Wohlforth cannot point to one Workers League member who has come to his defense more than one year after his resignation.

Why? First because Wohlforth's deliberate concealment of Nancy Fields' background was an intolerable violation of revolutionary security and the interests of the Fourth International.

Second, because Wohlforth's political behavior in the course of his final years as national secretary nearly led to the destruction of the Workers League through the criminal breaking up of its cadre.

It is utterly ludicrous for Wohlforth to speak of a "purge" in the Workers League leadership. He refers only to himself and Fields! And they were not "purged," they deserted the party. As for Fields, she became "a leading party figure" for reasons which had absolutely nothing to do with any political talents.

Until August 1973, her major political responsibilities had been confined to taking inventory of the literature and proofreading. The only reason for her assignment to the staff was that Fields claimed that she had received some professional training in proofreading for *Time* magazine. According to information obtained by the Commission of Inquiry, she obtained this job through her uncle Albert Morris.

After the first summer camp, having been brought into the leadership by Wohlforth for entirely personal reasons, Fields ran amuck in the Workers League.

Wherever she went, Fields left behind a trail of political destruction. She became Wohlforth's inseparable travelling companion and hatchetwoman. They jetted around the country to the tune of thousands of dollars in a wrecking operation the likes of which had never been seen in the Workers League. They closed down branches, threatened members with expulsions, and employed the crudest factional intrigues to drive comrades out of the Workers League.

The so-called "national tours" of Wohlforth and Fields had more the character of a honeymoon than a political intervention.

While upbraiding the party branches for financial difficulties, Wohlforth and Fields customarily insisted that they be put up at one of the finer downtown motels. And they rarely failed to inquire into the location of an exotic and expensive restaurant.

For Wohlforth and Fields, the typical visit to a party branch consisted of a short and abusive discussion with the membership, and then . . . a night on the town!

When on the East Coast, Wohlforth kept within driving distance of the New England cape resorts by maintaining — at the expense of the party — a nifty white sports car which seated two!

This was disposed of by the party after Wohlforth's resignation.

Wohlforth's life as a corrupt petty-bourgeois was the seamy side of his political degeneration and rabid hostility to the tasks of party building. He kept entirely aloof from the working class

and the responsibility for training new leadership. Wohlforth spent his last period in the party hardly ever venturing into the home of a worker to discuss the political questions raised in the trade union struggles.

It was the strength of the party and its history that enabled it to unmask Wohlforth and defeat his liquidationist policy, in spite of his abuse of his authority and his attempt to drive out those who questioned his course.

Once outside the movement, Wohlforth felt free to express only his real contempt for the working class. His earlier document published by Hansen last February characterized the coal miners of West Virginia as "backward" and incapable of grasping political questions.

Wohlforth's assertion that the Workers League "created a serious challenge to Healy" is politically sickening. This is language totally alien to Marxism. What does Wohlforth mean by "an indigenous leadership"? What is presented here is the swaggering boasts of an American chauvinist. Represented in each section is not an "indigenous" leadership — like lizards in a desert — but an internationalist leadership which always proceeds from the interests of the international working class and the Fourth International.

And what is the logic behind the asinine comment that the Workers League was a problem to Healy "personally"?

In the bankrupt style of the subjective idealist, Wohlforth is seeking to present an entirely personalized version of history. This, of course, has nothing in common with the materialist conception of history, which views the actions of all individuals not from the standpoint of their personal motives, but as the expression of historically developed class forces united in struggle.

One can only guess that Wohlforth is, with his usual delicacy, attempting to suggest that Comrade Healy's supposed desire to hold the Workers League "under the thumb" is an example of so-called "Stalinist" practices.

Wohlforth once again exposes his astonishing ignorance of and sheer indifference to the history of the Fourth Inter-

national. The significance of the Stalinization of the Third International was not that it represented Stalin's "personal" domination of the Comintern. Rather, it represented the subordination of the world party to the interests of the Thermidorean Stalinist bureaucracy, which emerged as a privileged caste within the Soviet Union beneath the pressure of imperialist encirclement.

The purpose of Wohlforth's outrageous insinuations against Comrade Healy is to fortify the slander campaign orchestrated by Joseph Hansen, the accomplice of the GPU.

If anyone felt threatened by the Workers League, the last thing he would have to do is move against Wohlforth. He and Fields were doing their best to bring the party to the point of collapse.

In anticipation of future lies by Wohlforth, we will now present a documentary history to prove the politically criminal nature of Wohlforth's and Fields' 1973-74 adventure.

The minutes of the Political Committee of January 13, 1974, contain the following section:

*"Report from TW. Proposed that:*

*"A. Bethlehem branch be disbanded and that LR be organizer of E. Flatbush branch and EB be in Bed-Stuy branch.*

*B. Two Bridges branch be disbanded; that AS be in E. Flatbush branch, and other cdes. be in Lower East Side branch."*

The minutes of February 3, 1974, contain the following section:

*"1. Report from TW on perspectives. Discussion. Proposed that:*

*"A. Bushwick and Fort Greene branches meet the next morning to discuss whether branches should continue to function. (!)*

*"B. Chelsea branch be dissolved.*

*"C. East Flatbush branch be built by a two week trailblazing team."*

Then, of course, there was Wohlforth's sensitive way of handling difficulties within the leadership — particularly those problems which he had deliberately created with the assistance of Fields.

Without any political discussion, in the most arrogant manner possible, Wohlforth deliberately drove out experienced leaders of the movement. This was his common practice. In most cases, when this occurred outside New York, the Political Committee was not even informed of Wohlforth's actions.

Wohlforth writes: "What a farce it is that Healy still claims we were removed because we liquidated the movement and dispersed its cadres!"

A farce! Let us quote from the most remarkable of all Wohlforth's letters. Writing on July 19, 1974, he described to Comrade Healy the situation existing in the Workers League.

*"In answer to the question about your coming to our camp and conference let me just give you some information on the League. It has been going through a very remarkable period. I have figured that since 'X' left about a year and a half ago, some 100 people have left the League. This figure refers only to people in the party for some time and playing important roles, not those who drift in and out, the usual sorting out of membership. The bulk of these people left in the period of the preparation for and since the summer camp last year which was the decisive turning point in the history of the League. (Emphasis added.)*

*"Even this figure does not show the full impact of the process. Almost half of those who left were from New York City. Almost half the National Committee and Political Committee were involved. Virtually the entire original youth leadership were also involved."*

Was Wohlforth disturbed by these developments? Not in the least. He continued:

*"The most remarkable thing about it is that while the net membership is now perhaps (!) a little lower than a year ago, but not substantially, (!!), in every other respect the party is far stronger (!!!)"*

What an extraordinary formula for party building. Drive out more than half the party leadership, destroy the youth leadership, lose 100 cadres — and the party will be stronger "in every other respect."

Wohlforth went on to discuss those "other respects."

*"We are, of course very much of a skeletal movement these days with very good work carried on by very, very few people in many areas. We are virtually wiped out as far as intellectuals are concerned — one big bastardly desertion. What is done on this front I have to do along with Nancy. We have nothing any more in the universities — and I mean nothing. The party is extremely weak on education and theoretical matters. Everywhere there are forces around us but the process of training cadres bringing in and holding new elements proceeds only very sporadically.*

*"As far as the trade unions are concerned our old, basically centrist work in the trade unions, especially SSEU, has collapsed precisely because of our struggle to change its character and turn to the youth."*

A more devastating indictment of the Wohlforth leadership, written by Wohlforth himself, could scarcely be conceived of. It was precisely these wrecking operations which endeared him to Hansen.

It should be obvious to every reader that the only purge of the Workers League leadership was that conducted by Wohlforth and Fields between 1973 and 1974.

The political motives behind Wohlforth's unprincipled and unstable actions were precisely his growing hostility to the International Committee and the responsibility of preparing the party for the rapid development of the economic and political crisis.

His movement back to Pabloism brought him into bitter opposition to the majority of the Workers League Central Committee and the perspectives of the party.

An expression of his degeneration was his unprincipled relationship with Nancy Fields, whose political methods reek of middle class radicalism and have nothing in common with Trotskyism.

In conclusion, let us emphasize again that Wohlforth was never "purged" from the Workers League. He was removed as national secretary. He remained on the Political Committee. Despite his past actions, the PC proceeded with complete objectivity toward Wohlforth and continued to assign him respon-

sibilities of central importance in the party.

We again cite the minutes of the Political Committee:

On September 4, four days after his removal from the position of national secretary, the minutes show that Comrade Fred Mazelis, newly elected national secretary, went out of his way to approach the change in leadership with complete objectivity. He is quoted in the summary of his report:

*"Now is not the time for us to turn inward with discussion; rather, we must posit the new experience against the old ways. The past methods of the party are an objective, not a personal, question. We must understand that pragmatism is hostile to materialism."*

At the same session of the Political Committee, Wohlforth was placed on the editorial board of the *Bulletin*. He was placed in charge of the educational department of the party as well. Finally, Wohlforth was placed on the PC subcommittee assigned to draft the perspectives document.

But Wohlforth fulfilled none of these responsibilities. Instead, he deserted the Workers League and placed himself at the disposal of Hansen as a liar for hire.

Wohlforth lied about Nancy Fields when he denied in August 1974 that Nancy Fields had any associations with the CIA. He has systematically lied about the circumstances of his removal as Workers League National Secretary and his subsequent desertion from the Workers League.

**The issue here is not one of Wohlforth's personal morality. The reader can by now, without the slightest difficulty, arrive at an appropriate conclusion on this matter.**

Wohlforth's lies are a function of his politics. His political ends require the use of lies. This is because he seeks to disguise the reactionary role he now plays and the anti-working class thrust of his policies by hurling slanders against those who represent the historic continuity of Trotskyism.

His falsifications, distortions, and calumnies all serve the interest of the ruling class. And, at a certain point, they resort to identical lies, with the revisionists and the bourgeois press citing each other as references.

This is the case in Wohlforth's remarks about the "Irene Gorst affair."

Irene Gorst is the name of a British actress who went to the bourgeois press with libelous accusations against the Workers Revolutionary Party.

These accusations, published in the Tory newspaper *Observer*, served as the pretext for the first political raid against a political party in Britain since 1944.

On the evening of September 27-28, within a half hour of the time when the *Observer* hit the streets with a lurid front-page article on the Workers Revolutionary Party educational center, more than 100 police — including forces from the notorious Special Branch — stormed into the educational center in Derbyshire.

WRP General Secretary Gerry Healy and other leading party members were placed under room arrest. Students were sequestered in another section of the school and guarded by police. Women students were stripped and searched. Police roamed through the educational premises unaccompanied, finally permitting the caretaker of the school to accompany the police on the search after two hours of continuous protest by the WRP leadership.

The *Observer* article, which gave full play to Gorst's charges that she had been "interrogated" at the educational center, made an insidious reference to "caches" of arms being hidden at the school.

No such "caches" were found because none existed. This charge was fabricated by the Tory newspaper, owned by Lord Astor, who was associated in the 1930s with the pro-Nazi Cliveden Set, as a pretext for the raid and the framing of the WRP.

The police finally "discovered" nine .22 caliber bullets, of which the WRP had absolutely no knowledge and which had obviously been planted in the school by agents of the police.

The raid was the product of a massive police and government conspiracy against the Workers Revolutionary Party and

the democratic rights of the working class. The raid was made without even a proper warrant bearing the signature of a justice of the peace.

It has been learned that Irene Gorst's boyfriend had associations with the police Special Branch and that Gorst herself had been urged to approach the *Observer* with her pack of lies by the right-wing leadership of the actors' Equity trade union, in which the WRP has considerable support.

The raid was a political attack on the party and democratic rights motivated by the enormous social and economic crisis and the fear of the ruling class of revolutionary leadership in the working class.

The raid on the WRP educational center provoked the greatest outrage within the workers' movement and in the trade unions. The WRP mobilized support in defense of the party on a scale never before seen in the history of the Trotskyist movement.

Virtually every trade union leader, including Jack Jones of the Transport and General Workers Union and Hugh Scanlon of the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers, signed a WRP petition condemning the raid and demanding an inquiry into the circumstances of the raid.

Hundreds of resolutions have been passed in trade union locals, trades councils, constituency Labour Party branches, and universities condemning the raid and demanding that Home Secretary Roy Jenkins explain why the raid took place.

The question has been raised by Labour MP's in Parliament.

On November 16, 1975, more than 5,000 trade unionists, workers, youth and students demonstrated in London against the raid.

Throughout the labor movement, the Irene Gorst allegations are universally recognized as Tory-sponsored lies concocted for the purpose of witchhunting, framing, and destroying the Workers Revolutionary Party.

But how does Wohlforth approach the Gorst allegations? **He accepts them as fact and supports the frameup.**

He writes: "According to reports in the British bourgeois press, Irene Gorst, a TV actress, was subjected to a seven-hour interrogation at a WRP school being held in a country estate the party recently acquired for such purposes."

Wohlforth begins, without challenging the assertions, with "reports in the British bourgeois press." In other words, he stands with the Tory press and the provocateur Gorst.

Wohlforth continues: "During this ordeal (!) Gorst was refused permission to leave the room and was accused of being a police agent. Healy has so far refused to comment on this affair, which is reminiscent of his conduct in relation to Nancy Fields. Gorst went to the press over the matter and the police used the press account as an excuse for a police raid on the school."

As Wohlforth knows, Gerry Healy cannot make a public statement on Gorst because a libel suit initiated by the Workers Revolutionary Party against the *Observer* is now pending. But the *Workers Press*, newspaper of the WRP, has thoroughly exposed the conspiratorial nature of the police raid.

We are not in the least surprised that Nancy Fields feels great political attraction and sympathy with the provocateur Irene Gorst.

With almost unbelievable shamelessness, Wohlforth announces: "We, of course, unconditionally defend the WRP against this attack on its democratic rights and against the absurd charge that the WRP ever had any connection with terrorism or guns."

Of course. Of course.

But, of course, Wohlforth goes on to say: "The Gorst case illustrates how Healy's own actions can serve as a pretext for police raids."

Wohlforth's "defense" of the WRP consists of solidarizing himself with the provocateur Gorst, accepting her lies as facts, and thus concluding that the WRP is responsible for the police raid.

Everything Wohlforth writes could be printed in the *Obser-*

ver, and, as a matter of fact, what the *Observer* wrote has been reprinted in Hansen's house organ, *Intercontinental Press*.

In this way, Hansen became the American sponsor of the *Observer* witchhunt against the British section of the International Committee of the Fourth International.

# The Accomplice of Joseph Hansen

Wohlforth becomes really worked up about what he calls **"The Joseph Hansen slander campaign."**

He states indignantly:

*"The Bulletin and Workers Press have run a whole series of articles entitled 'Security and the Fourth International,' going into detail on every effort of the GPU or police to penetrate the Fourth International. The real purpose of this series becomes clear in the last article, which accuses Joseph Hansen of responsibility in the death of Trotsky, covering up for GPU penetrations, and perhaps of being an agent himself."*

Wohlforth's verdict is that, "All this is based on facts so flimsy as to be ridiculous."

First, let us recall that Wohlforth established his credentials as a defender of the security of the revolutionary movement by hiding from the Workers League the fact that Nancy Fields was raised by an uncle who happened to be a prominent figure in the Central Intelligence Agency.

Second, the International Committee charged, on the basis of meticulously researched facts and documents, that both Hansen and George Novack are accomplices of the GPU.

Wohlforth simply evades all the irrefutable evidence assembled by the International Committee.

To make it absolutely clear, we will repeat the summary of the charges made by the International Committee against Hansen and Novack:

1. That for 37 years Joseph Hansen has suppressed from the

Trotskyist movement details of his personal contacts with a GPU agent known as "John" in New York in 1938.

His contact with the GPU agent "John" only emerged in August 1975, when the International Committee uncovered hitherto unpublished State Department archives in Washington, DC.

They proved Hansen gave details of his contact with the GPU agent to US consul Robert G. McGregor during a secret visit to the American Embassy in Mexico City on August 31, 1940, eleven days after Trotsky's assassination. McGregor reported to his superiors in the US State Department on September 1, 1940:

*"Hansen stated that when in New York in 1938 he was himself approached by an agent of the GPU and asked to desert the Fourth International and join the Third. He referred the matter to Trotsky, who asked him to go as far with the matter as possible. For three months Hansen had relations with a man who merely identified himself as 'John,' and did not otherwise reveal his real identity."*  
(Report by Robert G. McGregor, American Consulate General, Mexico, September 1, 1940.)

Hansen has now admitted the secret conversation with US consul McGregor, although no one in the Trotskyist movement or Trotsky's household knew anything about it before today.

He remains absolutely silent about his three month connivance with the GPU agent "John." We know why. "John" was one of the many aliases of Dr. Gregory Rabinowitz, head of the Russian Red Cross in the United States between 1936 and 1939.

Rabinowitz played the central role for the GPU in the United States in planting agents in the Trotskyist movement to set up the assassination of Trotsky.

His GPU network included Ruby Weil, who was instructed by Rabinowitz to accompany SWP member Sylvia Ageloff to Europe in 1938, where Miss Ageloff was duped into a relationship with Trotsky's assassin, Ramon Mercader, alias Jacques Mornard.

Sylvia Franklin, alias Sylvia Caldwell, who was planted in the SWP in New York and rose to become the most personal of private secretaries to the late James P. Cannon before she was unmasked in 1950;

Thomas L. Black, American Communist Party member who was planted in the SWP in 1936 and subsequently instructed by the GPU to get to Trotsky's household at Coyoacan "to arrange the assassination of Trotsky."

All three GPU agents, members of the Communist Party, were told by Rabinowitz to break all connections with the CP and worm their way high up into the Trotskyist movement.

Miss Weil knew Rabinowitz as "John Rich"; Miss Franklin knew him as "Roberts"; and Black knew him as "Dr. Schwartz."

We state categorically that Hansen is lying when he says that Trotsky told him to consort with the GPU agent "John" Rabinowitz. It is inconceivable that the Bolshevik leader would instruct the head of his security arrangements at Coyoacan to meet a GPU agent over a period of three months.

If Trotsky knew that Hansen had been approached by "John," he would have exposed it at once. He would have unmasked the GPU's attempt to suborn one of his secretaries as a warning to the New York organization, as well as the Trotskyist movement elsewhere.

If Hansen had told Trotsky about his contact with the GPU agent, Trotsky's attention would have immediately been drawn to the attempted penetration of the SWP at a national level in New York. He would have instituted the most extreme precautions regarding the selection of his guard.

It could have led to the earlier unmasking of Sylvia Franklin and prevented the sending of the inexperienced and politically suspect Robert Sheldon Harte as a guard.

Hansen's deliberate concealment of his meetings with the GPU agent "John" until the International Committee unearthed official documents in 1975 sabotaged the security vigilance of the Trotskyist movement in the days leading up to Trotsky's assassination and until the present day.

2. Joseph Hansen and George Novack have deliberately created diversions and slander campaigns to prevent a full-scale inquiry into the security at Coyoacan where Trotsky was murdered on August 20, 1940.

Hansen was delegated by the SWP Political Committee to be in charge of security in Mexico; Novack was assigned "to safeguard Trotsky in every way possible against the death warrant issued against him by Stalin's henchmen." (*Intercontinental Press*, December 8, 1975)

They have completely betrayed these responsibilities by suppressing vital evidence of Stalinist GPU penetration of Trotsky's household itself.

This is revealed in sworn testimony given by Thomas L. Black before the United States Senate judiciary committee on May 17, 1956.

Black, a chemist, from Newark, New Jersey, had a political career which traversed the Communist Party and Hansen's Socialist Workers Party, and finally, he ended up an FBI informer.

The Stalinists persuaded him to leave the CP in 1936 and infiltrate the SWP "to ingratiate myself with the leadership of the party." His GPU controller was Dr. Gregory Rabinowitz, head of the Russian Red Cross, the GPU chief responsible for planting Sylvia Franklin in Cannon's office and sending Ruby Weil to Europe as Sylvia Ageloff's travelling companion in 1938.

This is an excerpt from the official 1956 Senate transcript:

**Q:** *Did he give you an assignment?*

**Black:** *Yes, sir. When I was released from the hospital he told me that he wanted me to quit my job and make arrangements to go to Coyoacan.*

**Q:** *Did he state for what purpose?*

**Black:** *Not specifically. He said that he wanted me to go down and join Trotsky's household.*

**Q:** *In other words, he wanted you to join the household itself?*

**Black:** *That is correct.*

**Q:** *And keep contact with him?*

**Black:** *That is right.*

**Q:** *Did you learn what Rabinowitz's plan was at that particular time?*

**Black:** *No, not at that time. I asked some questions, and he told me that the questions the nature of which I was asking did not need to concern me then. I would get instructions later. First, I was to go to Coyoacan, and there would be other Soviet agents in Trotsky's household, and I asked him who they would be. He said I would find out that when the time came. I asked him what I was supposed to do, and he said I would be told when the time came. He refused to answer any question about what the nature of the work was.*

**Q:** *Did you subsequently find out what the nature of that assignment was?*

**Black:** *Yes sir.*

**Q:** *What was the nature of that assignment?*

**Black:** *To arrange the assassination of Trotsky.*

(US Senate judiciary committee, "Scope of Soviet Activity in the United States," May 17, 1956, Library of Congress)

In the event, Black did not carry out the assignment which Rabinowitz ordered him to conduct in the SWP. But his testimony contains the disclosure that there were "other Soviet agents in Trotsky's household."

Hansen and Novack have kept their mouths shut about this critical testimony for almost 20 years. We say, every single member of Trotsky's household who is still alive should be investigated to clear the stains of suspicion in the Senate record and to unmask the GPU agents Rabinowitz referred to.

It also means investigating from top to bottom the procedure for selecting members of the household at the SWP's New York office where Sylvia Franklin held court.

3. Joseph Hansen and George Novack have protected and covered up for Sylvia Franklin, the GPU agent in the Socialist Workers Party who became personal secretary to the late James P. Cannon throughout the 1940s.

She was a GPU agent planted at the top of the SWP's national headquarters in New York with access to all of Can-

non's correspondence as well as National Committee and Political Committee minutes.

Her reports were fed to the GPU network run by Dr. Gregory Rabinowitz and subsequently by Soviet master spy Jack Soble.

Sworn testimony was given 25 years ago to the fact that Sylvia Franklin was a GPU agent. Louis Budenz, managing editor of the Stalinist *Daily Worker*, who became an FBI informer, presented a sworn and notarized affidavit to the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) on November 11, 1950. He testified:

*"Another person whom I introduced to Roberts (Rabinowitz) was Sylvia Franklin, also known as Sylvia Caldwell and whose maiden name was something like Sylvia Kallen.*

*"In Chicago, Roberts gave Sylvia Franklin \$300 as an initial expense account to make the trip to New York where he had arranged her employment with a woman doctor, who was connected with the Soviet secret police.*

*"By first volunteering to do secretarial work in the national Trotskyite offices in New York, Sylvia Franklin under the direction of Roberts-Rabinowitz, gradually made herself indispensable to James Cannon, then head of the American Trotskyites.*

*"She became his secretary and served in that capacity for some time. Roberts-Rabinowitz advised me that she had proved to be invaluable." (See "American Aspects of Assassination of Leon Trotsky," HUAC, Library of Congress.)*

James Cannon denounced Budenz, saying that Miss Franklin was "an honest comrade who gave years of valued service to the cause." ("An Answer to Budenz's Latest Frameup," *The Militant*, August 28, 1950)

Hansen and Novack swear by Miss Franklin to this day; she was "an exemplary comrade." (Joseph Hansen in *Intercontinental Press*, November 24, 1975)

They defend her completely by, conversely, accusing the International Committee of "repeating the fabrications circulated by Budenz." (*Ibid.*)

On November 29, 1960, a New York federal grand jury indicted Sylvia Franklin in her maiden name, Sylvia Callen, on Soviet espionage charges. Her co-defendants included Lavrenti Beria, head of the GPU; Vassili Zubilin, wartime GPU chief in the US; Dr. Robert Soblen, brother of the convicted GPU spy Jack Soble; Floyd Cleveland Miller, another Stalinist plant in the SWP; and two GPU couriers, Lucy Booker and Esther Rand.

The indictment charged Miss Callen (Franklin) with being a co-conspirator on charges "to violate subsections (a) and (c) of Section 793, Title 18, United States Code, in that they did, for the purpose of obtaining information respecting the national defense of the United States of America, unlawfully, willfully, and knowingly conspire" to obtain information concerning US national defense.

When the whole historical record shrieks that Sylvia Franklin was the most poisonous GPU hatchet woman, Hansen and Novack both say, "no."

4. Joseph Hansen has contrived to prevent an inquiry into the role of Robert Sheldon Harte, the guard sent by the SWP's New York headquarters to Trotsky's household in April 1940.

Trotsky, Natalia, and their grandson, Seva, had the narrowest escape from death on the night of May 24, 1940, after Harte broke the guards' regulations and let in intruders who turned out to be a Stalinist raiding party armed with machine guns and bombs.

Hansen has gone on covering up for Harte's role, although a mountain of new evidence has been gathered casting the gravest suspicion on him.

Julian Gorkin, authority on Stalin's crimes, has written:

*"If it were admitted that Sheldon was a spy, that would place the question of responsibility on the chief Trotskyists in New York, who had sent him to Mexico. We do no more than mention this aspect of the question. Let each one draw his own conclusions."*

(General Sanchez Salazar in collaboration with Julian Gorkin, *Murder in Mexico*, Secker & Warburg, 1950)

5. Joseph Hansen has suppressed the fact that in 1941, the Socialist Workers Party helped bring Stalin's No. 1 anti-Trotskyist agent, Mark Zborowski, into the United States from France.

Hansen knew at the time that leading European Trotskyists were convinced that Zborowski was a GPU agent. He had read the anonymous letter (written by NKVD defector General Alexander Orlov) to Trotsky in 1938 which pinpointed "Mark," the Polish Jew in the French Left Opposition, as the GPU's top agent in Paris.

Zborowski masterminded the theft of Trotsky's Russian archives and the murder of Trotsky's son, Leon Sedov, and his secretaries, Rudolf Klement and Erwin Wolf. As Trotsky's secretary at Coyoacan, Hansen knew that Trotsky had instructed a security inquiry into Zborowski.

But Hansen says that investigations into the role of Zborowski are "a dry well." (*Intercontinental Press*, November 24, 1975)

He claims the right to give no explanation at all of how Zborowski arrived in the US and was reintegrated into the Fourth International, courtesy of the SWP.

After a deafening silence of 35 years, George Novack admits, after prompting from the International Committee, that he and Mrs. David Dallin (Lola Estrine) brought Zborowski into the USA and inducted him back into the top echelons of the Fourth International.

*"Unknown to us at that time was the presence of one GPU agent among those we brought to safety. That was Mark Zborowski (Etienne), around whom Healy has raised his hue and cry decades later." (Intercontinental Press, December 8, 1975)*

6. We accuse George Novack and Mrs. David Dallin (Lola Estrine) of admitting the GPU spy Mark Zborowski into the United States and reintegrating him into the top levels of the Fourth International, although he was gravely suspect, and then suppressing this fact for 35 years.

Mrs. Dallin knew the GPU suspicions which surrounded Zborowski. She, like Hansen, had read the Orlov letter tipping off Trotsky about the Stalinist agent "Mark" who worked in Paris with his son, Leon Sedov.

She also knew that Trotsky had instructed a commission of inquiry to investigate charges that Zborowski was a GPU agent.

She was his closest friend and political collaborator throughout the latter part of the 1930s, when he carried out the theft of Trotsky's archives, set up the murder of Leon Sedov and disrupted Trotsky's campaign to defend himself against the Moscow Trials frameup.

But she travelled to France in 1941, fraudulently obtained travel documents for him, met him off the boat in Philadelphia, found him accommodation and a job.

Within a year, Zborowski was working as a close confidante of Sam Gordon, party name J.B. Stuart, and Jean van Heijenoort, leading members in the international work of the Fourth International; SWP meetings were held in his Manhattan apartment.

When Zborowski was belatedly unmasked as late as 1956, Novack, who was in charge of security of overseas Trotskyists, as well as Trotsky's security in Mexico, said nothing about his role in bringing Zborowski into the Trotskyist movement in New York.

7. Joseph Hansen has deliberately covered up the GPU spy career of Floyd Cleveland Miller, the US Stalinist who tapped James P. Cannon's home telephone for a year before joining the SWP to become a leading figure in organizing Trotskyist seamen.

Miller took over from Sam Gordon as editor of the Seafarers' International Union newspaper. When Sam Gordon became responsible for the work of the International Secretariat of the Fourth International in New York, he worked closely with Mark Zborowski, who arrived from occupied France in 1941.

As a seaman, Miller was in contact with overseas sections

providing regular information which was discussed with Zborowski.

Hansen treacherously dismisses Miller's role in tipping off the GPU about sea-going Trotskyists as insignificant.

Miller could not have been all that insignificant, since the SWP leadership sent him to Mexico in 1944 to see Natalia with the final proofs of Trotsky's book on Stalin — a task of serious responsibility.

8. George Novack accuses Leon Trotsky and his son Leon Sedov of responsibility for their own deaths.

Novack writes: "Healy likewise does not see that Hansen and the others are only secondary figures in the drama. The principal actors were Trotsky and Sedov themselves who trusted Etienne (Zborowski) and allowed Jacson (Mercader) entry into the household." (*Intercontinental Press*, December 8, 1975)

This is the most monstrous lie of all — a lie which Novack has taken directly from the GPU.

Trotsky defended himself indefatigably against this Stalinist lie, which was fabricated by the GPU after the unsuccessful assassination attempt of May 24, 1940. The purpose of the GPU's "theory of self-assault" was to cover the tracks of its agents.

*"The GPU mobilized with great skill its agents in order to kill me. The attempt failed owing to an accident. The friends of the GPU are compromised. They are now compelled to do everything in their power in order to fix upon me the responsibility for the unsuccessful attempt of their chieftain. In accomplishing this they have not a wide choice of means. They are compelled to operate with the crudest of methods, and to guide themselves by Hitler's aphorism: the bigger the lie, the more readily it will be believed."*

The words are those of Trotsky, written in 1940. But 35 years later, Novack revives the old GPU slander to shift attention away from its crimes. This makes Novack the co-conspirator of Hansen.



Are these, as Wohlforth claims, "facts so flimsy as to be ridiculous?"

We challenge Wohlforth to answer the follow questions:

Why did Hansen have secret meetings in New York in 1938 with the GPU agent Gregory Rabinowitz, alias "John," who was at the center of Stalinist operations to murder Trotsky in Coyoacan? If Hansen's sole purpose in going to the American Embassy was, as Wohlforth claims, to press McGregor "to investigate possible American connections with the assassination," why did Hansen never reveal his contacts with John to the Socialist Workers Party? Why did Hansen fail to have John photographed during his meetings with him over three months, or in any way identify this dangerous GPU agent?

Why has Hansen never answered the charges of Thomas Black that there were GPU operatives in Trotsky's household, nor sought to establish their identities?

Why has Hansen defended Sylvia Franklin as an "exemplary comrade" when she has been publicly unmasked as a GPU agent in a federal grand jury indictment? What hold does Franklin have on Hansen and Novack?

Why did Hansen and Novack hide the fact that the SWP leadership made the arrangements to bring Mark Zborowski into the United States? Why have Hansen and Novack deliberately suppressed the story of Zborowski's activities within the United States after he was reintegrated into the leadership of the Fourth International in New York?

Why has Hansen deliberately sought to brush off the real extent of GPU agent Floyd Cleveland Miller's actions within the SWP ?

How can Hansen explain the failure of the SWP to play any role in unmasking any of the GPU operatives in its midst? Had it been left to Hansen and Novack, Mark Zborowski might have to this day preserved his reputation as an "old Trotskyist" and "secretary" to Leon Sedov.

Why has Hansen contrived to prevent an inquiry into the role of Robert Sheldon Harte and into all the serious questions

raised by Harold Robins, captain of the guard at Coyoacan, related to Trotsky's security, in his Open Letter of December 23, 1975, to the SWP ?

Wohlforth does not have the answer to these questions so he is covering up for Hansen. He is giving all the assistance he can to Hansen's attempt to prevent the establishment of a commission of inquiry, called for by the International Committee, to investigate the evidence we have assembled.

Rather, Wohlforth peddles the GPU-style slanders that have been employed by Hansen: that those who raise the question of security in the Fourth International and set out to expose the crimes of Stalinism are "mad."

We say these are GPU-style slanders because the charge of madness is used by the Soviet bureaucracy to slander and attempt to physically destroy all opponents within the Soviet Union. Wohlforth writes:

*"We are not dealing here simply with a matter of paranoia or 'crazies'. There is a method to the madness of Healy, for surely it is madness. Healy has developed a method of political functioning consistent with his idealist philosophical method and sectarian policies, whose aim it is to perpetuate himself and a small group of cult followers at the expense of the interests of the working class and of the principles and traditions of Trotskyism. It is madness all right, but it is madness used consciously to cover a political course hostile to Trotskyism."*

The GPU-style lies of Hansen will not prevent the establishment of the commission of inquiry.

Powerful historical forces are at work and the development of the world revolution finds its positive expression in the unmasking of the GPU accomplices by the International Committee.

These great historical forces are overtaking the political wretch Wohlforth with the strength and speed of an avalanche.

# *Whither Wohlforth?*

We have, so far, traced the political course of Wohlforth's right-wing, anti-working class and anti-Trotskyist degeneration since he deserted the Workers League in September 1974.

1. Wohlforth has repudiated the Marxist theory of knowledge and embraced the crudest variations of pragmatist, subjective idealist philosophy. He no longer accepts the fundamentals of the materialist, scientific world outlook: that being is primary over consciousness, that there exists a material world independent of consciousness, that man's brain is a natural organ whose product is thought, that man's thoughts reflect universal matter in motion, and that the universal and particular are a unity and conflict of opposites which are interpenetrating and being transformed, the one into the other.

2. He rejects the whole history of the struggle of Bolshevism against petty bourgeois revisionism, and consequently denies the central role of the revolutionary party in leading the working class in the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

3. Wohlforth advances a bankrupt reformist conception of the present period, denying that the decisive task now posed to the revolutionary party is the preparation for the struggle of the working class for power. Without making any assessment of the world economic crisis, he dismisses all the social and political implications of the crisis, including the danger of war.

4. Wohlforth at one and the same time, capitulates before the trade union bureaucracy in his opposition to the fight for the building of a labor party and lines up with the capitalist state via his support to the SWP's "antiracist" campaign in Boston, which is based on the revisionists' call for federal

troops. He blames the working class, not the capitalist system, for racism, and he advocates government attacks on the trade unions.

5. Wohlforth has become the hired hand of GPU accomplice Joseph Hansen, whom he defends without answering a single charge made by the International Committee. He serves the reactionary ends of Hansen by piling lie upon lie without once explaining his political break with everything he had publicly held for nearly 15 years.

6. Wohlforth solidarizes himself with the capitalist state through his support for the Tory witchhunt against the Workers Revolutionary Party in England, whose educational center was raided by the police in September, 1975.

Since deserting the Workers League, Wohlforth has moved to the right with a speed almost without parallel even in the sordid annals of revisionism.

But to answer the question, "Whither Wohlforth?", one must proceed not from Wohlforth as an individual, but rather from the standpoint of the world crisis.

Wohlforth's gross treachery is a reflection in the negative of the extreme rapidity of the development of the social crisis that is bringing to a head revolutionary struggles in all the advanced capitalist countries, as well as in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

We stand at the threshold of titanic class battles, which will bring to its historical culmination the epoch of social revolution which opened with the first revolution and the October victory of the Bolshevik Party in Russia led by Lenin and Trotsky.

This crisis is now bringing into revolutionary struggles the great social force of millions of workers internationally who can defend their living standards, trade unions, and basic democratic rights only through the destruction of the capitalist system.

Led by the revolutionary party, the working class will rally to the banner of the social revolution big sections of the middle class, which finds itself uprooted and driven into poverty by the decay of capitalism.

The best elements from among the middle class will take their place in the revolutionary party itself and will fight with unstinting devotion for the victory of the working class.

However, layers of the middle class embittered by the crisis will vent their rage on the working class and its revolutionary leadership and be drawn into the orbit of the big bourgeoisie. These frenzied sections of the petty bourgeoisie will be the reactionary mass from which the ruling class will seek to recruit their fascist shock troops for the preservation of capitalism.

Concurrent with the development of extreme right-wing forces, the bourgeoisie seeks to whip up the most reactionary forms of nationalism and chauvinism, as an essential element of its preparations for imperialist war.

It is compelled to exert all of its class pressure to corrupt the leadership of the working class and line it up behind its imperialist policies in order to break the resistance of the proletariat to the war aims of the ruling class.

This process was explained by Trotsky:

*"The intensification of class contradictions within each country, the intensification of antagonisms between one country and another, produce a situation in which imperialist capitalism can tolerate (i.e., up to a certain time) a reformist bureaucracy only if the latter serves directly as a petty but active stockholder of its imperialist enterprises, of its plans and programs within the country as well as on the world arena. Social reformism must become transformed into social imperialism in order to prolong its existence, but only to prolong it and nothing more. Because along this road there is no way out in general."* (Trotsky, *Marxism and the Trade Unions*, Labor Publications, p. 14)

In the general chauvinist intoxication of the reformist working class leadership, the ruling class does not confine its efforts to the trade union bureaucracy.

As the crisis deepens, the capitalists increase to the nth degree their pressure upon the revolutionary movement. From among those who have abandoned Marxism or are theoretically unprepared to withstand the pressures exerted by the enemy

class, the bourgeoisie seeks to recruit its most influential servants.

The renegade Wohlforth represents such a corrupt element, and he has been politically shaped by this crisis of imperialism. He must be examined within the context of the rightward movement of layers of the petty bourgeoisie and the deepening crisis of American imperialism.

Wohlforth's political evolution has been in the direction of the most treacherous capitulation to American imperialism. Having repudiated Marxism, he is well on his way to completing his transformation into an out-and-out anti-communist and full-fledged servant of the ruling class.

Guided by his subjective motivations, Wohlforth is the instrument of reactionary class forces, which now determine his development.

There is nothing holding Wohlforth back from his right-wing course. He is not restrained by history or by principles. He has not the slightest interest in determining objective truth. Quite the opposite: Wohlforth lies consciously for the most malignant factional purposes.

The unmistakable signposts of Wohlforth's development in the direction of anticommunism are contained within his politics. The method is not only the man, but also the man's politics. The fruit of Wohlforth's rejection of dialectical materialism and his espousal of the subjective idealist outlook is his rejection of revolutionary internationalism and the adoption of a "theory" of "American exceptionalism."

Wohlforth maintains, as we have seen, that we must proceed from a "particular" and derive the universal through a mental process.

Accepting only the existence of individual objects as real and relegating the universal to the realm of idealist mental constructions, Wohlforth inevitably takes as his political point of departure national peculiarities.

An international perspective then becomes nothing more than his subjective summation of his "observations" of developments in different countries.

The great theoretical conquest of the Third International under Lenin and Trotsky was its elucidation of an international strategy for the construction of the world party of the socialist revolution.

Repeatedly, Trotsky emphasized that a revolutionary strategy cannot be worked out in one country divorced from an international perspective which takes into account the whole of the development of the world capitalist crisis.

He wrote in *Permanent Revolution*:

*"But the specific features of national economy, no matter how great, enter as component parts and in increasing measure into the higher reality which is called world economy and on which alone, in the last analysis, the internationalism of the Communist Parties rests."* (Trotsky, *Permanent Revolution*, New Park Publications, p. 24)

Or, as Trotsky wrote in his "Draft Program of the Comintern":

*"In our epoch, which is the epoch of imperialism, i.e., of world economy and world politics under the hegemony of finance capital, not a single communist party can establish its program by proceeding solely or mainly from conditions and tendencies of development in its own country. This also holds entirely true for the party that wields the state power within the boundaries of the USSR. On August 4, 1914, the death knell sounded for national programs for all time. The revolutionary party of the proletariat can base itself only upon an international program corresponding to the character of the present epoch, the epoch of the highest development and collapse of capitalism. An international communist program is in no case the sum total of national programs or an amalgam of their common features. The international program must proceed directly from an analysis of the conditions and tendencies of the world political system taken as a whole in all its connections and contradictions, that is, with the mutually antagonistic interdependence of its separate parts. In the present epoch, to a much larger extent than in the past, the national orientation of the proletariat must and can flow only from a world orientation and not vice versa. Herein lies the basic and primary difference between*

*communist internationalism and all varieties of national socialism."*  
*(Third International After Lenin, New Park Publications, pp. 3-4)*

Wohlforth, of course, disagrees with Trotsky. Believing that "The dialectical process can never begin with a universal," he stands with the "concrete" and "particular" national developments, which he introduces with a vulgar exaltation of nationalism.

He writes:

*"For Trotskyists, it is not only a matter of supporting revolutions that break out in other countries — Cuba, Algeria, or even Vietnam — which they of course do to the best of their ability, but of how they respond to the emergence in their own country of a working class that is determined to fight but lacks an understanding of how to fight. This is the supreme test of all revolutionists. All tendencies must and will be sorted out on this basis. At the same time, important theoretical questions from the past, the confusion and disorientation from that period, will be sorted out on this basis as well."*

Wohlforth reiterates this point a bit further down:

*"Today, as we said, the acid test of every revolutionist is one's relationship to the movement of the working class within one's own country."*

To speak of "one's relationship to the movement of the working class within one's own country" is to substitute the language of a petty bourgeois radical nationalist for that of the proletarian internationalist.

It is to proceed from the framework of the appearance of a self-sufficient American capitalism and an "American" working class, rather than the actual interrelation between and dependence of American capitalism and the world economy, and the development of the working class in the United States within the context of the international offensive of the working class.

Wohlforth advances his right-wing nationalist perspective precisely at the point when the Socialist Workers Party is in a united front with American imperialism against the international development of the social revolution.

The SWP has established itself as the foremost propagandist within middle class radical circles for the cause of the imperialist puppet forces in Angola.

The SWP has supported the pro-imperialist UNITA and FNLA forces against the revolutionary struggles of Angolan workers and peasants mobilized by the MPLA. Wohlforth's new allies have publicly justified the acceptance of CIA funds by Jonas Savimbi and Holden Roberto.

But this does not bother Wohlforth. What he finds important is not the great issues in the development of the world revolution, but rather "one's" relationship to one's "own" working class.

Wohlforth's attempt to work out a parochial, "American" perspective for his "own" working class finds its full flowering in his current effort to justify a "home grown," "national," "American communism" in opposition to the **world party** of the social revolution represented by the International Committee of the Fourth International.

This "American communism" now espoused by Wohlforth will, of course, have nothing to do with communism. It can be nothing more than a reactionary petty bourgeois anti-communist formation built according to the specifications of American imperialism.

We draw the attention of our readers to an article recently published in the newspaper of the revisionist Thornett group in England. It is Wohlforth's assessment of James P. Cannon and it was written in opposition to the obituary of Cannon written by Cde. Michael Banda of the Workers Revolutionary Party.

The central aim of Wohlforth's assessment is to argue that Cannon represented the ideal of an "American Trotskyist," which must be resurrected as a very special national phenomenon. Cannon is presented first and foremost as an American leader, nourished on the soil of America, who must be applauded for his attempts to build a national revolutionary movement.

In essence, Wohlforth's "assessment" is a continuation of the anti-communist, anti-internationalist diatribe against

Bolshevism advanced at an earlier stage by historians like Theodore Draper, whose central theme in his reactionary history of American communism was that the American CP was originally polluted by its association with the Leninist Third International between 1919 and 1924.

As a matter of fact, Wohlforth makes a warm reference to Draper's "two invaluable volumes on early communism" which were a product of cold-war historiography.

The common assumption of Wohlforth, Draper, and the entire school of anti-communist radicals is that the Russian Revolution was a terrible blow to American socialism because it infected the virgin radical soil of the United States with "Bolshevik methods."

Wohlforth states that "the fact that Trotskyism emerged from the 'Americanizers' and not from the foreign language sects is not an accidental phenomenon but one of the greatest significance to us today. After all, American Trotskyism was the only serious Trotskyist movement to develop in the 1930s. As we assess its weaknesses, let us seek to understand why it existed at all."

Wohlforth deliberately sets out to minimize the contribution of Trotsky to the development of the SWP, and, in fact, he tries to abstract the Socialist Workers Party out of the entire international struggle waged by the Marxist movement, represented by the International Left Opposition led by Trotsky.

"It would explain nothing," writes Wohlforth, "to attribute to Trotsky's intervention everything that was healthy in the American movement and to Cannon's contribution only a negative pragmatism. After all, Trotsky paid far greater attention to the German party and the French party but nothing ever emerged in the way of leadership or cadre in either country."

This entire passage is an abominable slander against Leon Trotsky and the historic struggle he waged against Stalinism. In this struggle, Trotsky forged the Fourth International and its American section, the SWP.

The thrust of Wohlforth's argument is entirely reactionary. What he is saying is this: Trotsky was active in Europe, but accomplished nothing. But Cannon, flesh and blood of the American working class, rustled up a party.

*"The American party was built through a relationship between a serious proletarian leadership around Cannon, with some history behind it, and Trotsky."*

How nice of Wohlforth to remember Trotsky! But not for long. Wohlforth continues: "This leadership emerged from that section of the old Communist movement closest to the working class which, at the same time, was determined to build a Leninist party."

What anti-Marxist, nationalistic, impressionistic drivel! How he concludes that Cannon was closer to the American working class, or more American or whatever, than a William Foster, who became a Stalinist, is not explained. As a proletarian leader, at least as Wohlforth uses the term, William Z. Foster was far more renowned in the 1920s — as the leader of the 1919 Steel strike — than James P. Cannon.

The decisive issue in the development of both Cannon and Foster was not their association with a section of the American CP mystically described by Wohlforth as "closest to the working class."

Rather, the decisive issue was their position on the great international issues in the world working class movement raised in the struggle waged by Trotsky against Stalinism, precisely what Wohlforth leaves out.

Wohlforth says that Trotsky built nothing in Germany and France. These are the words of a contemptible middle class cynic. In these battles against Third Period ultra-leftism and then against popular frontism, Trotsky built the Fourth International. What Cannon learned, whatever cadre developed in the United States, was the product of the struggle led by Trotsky. Cannon would have been the first to admit this.

Nor does Wohlforth take into consideration the fact that the struggle to build the Fourth International in Europe took place

under conditions of the bloodiest defeats of the working class in Europe. But of what importance are such historical "trifles" for Wohlforth!

Everything Wohlforth writes on Cannon is in the service of a right-wing, nationalist political perspective. He concludes that a revolutionary leadership:

*"... could not develop out of adaptations to European experiences. A leadership of workers can never be imported into a country. This is why all the cries of the bourgeoisie about the export of revolution are so phony. A leadership must develop out of the conditions within a particular country through a common struggle with revolutionaries organized on an international scale. Such a leadership must carry with it all the difficulties and weaknesses, as well as the strengths of its own working class. If this were not the case, it would then be completely separated from this and out of touch with that working class."*

When Wohlforth speaks of a leadership carrying "all the difficulties and weaknesses" of the working class in its own country, he is actually appealing for a party which adapts to the bourgeois consciousness of the working class, that is, all the political backwardness that reflects the ideological pressure of the ruling class on the workers movement. Otherwise, Wohlforth warns, the party will be "out of touch."

He is opposed to a Marxist party which fights at all points to break the working class from the ideological domination of the bourgeoisie and raise its conscious practice to the heights of the historical tasks posed before it.

Wohlforth proceeds from the standpoint of building an "American" party in which all the "difficulties and weaknesses" of the working class — expressed politically via the AFL-CIO bureaucracy — can be accommodated. His "internationalism" is thus nothing more than a hollow phrase, signifying only the formal connection with national parties in other countries. This would then allow Wohlforth to do what he wants: pursue policies determined by American developments viewed within a nationalist framework and divorced from the primary con-

siderations of the world crisis and the interests of the world socialist revolution.

That is why Wohlforth continually stresses "the peculiarities of the American situation" in opposition to the unity and interconnectedness of the world crisis which Trotsky and all Marxists have taken as their point of departure. As Trotsky wrote, "In reality, the national peculiarities represent an original combination of the basic features of the world process." (*Trotsky, Permanent Revolution*, New Park Publications, p.23.)

Wohlforth is not the first to have attacked Marxism in order to advance the platform of national "peculiarities." He finds his historical antecedent in the person of Jay Lovestone. The political parallel between these two men is not at all accidental. Like Wohlforth, Lovestone was an unprincipled factionalist guided primarily by personal anxiety for his own career in the Communist Party.

He tailored his right-wing policy of American exceptionalism — whose central thesis was that capitalism in the United States was immune to crisis — to the policies of the Stalinist apparatus in the mid-1920s. Caught unawares by the ultra-left turn of Stalin in 1928, Lovestone found himself cornered in an ill-fated alliance with Bukharin, which cost him the leadership of the American Communist Party.

Unable to regain the good graces of Stalin, Lovestone became an "anti-Stalinist" and established an independent right-centrist outfit. Principled issues did not concern him in the slightest. But the logic of his conception of "American exceptionalism" did work itself out as Lovestone moved rapidly to anti-communist positions.

In the course of his right-wing evolution, Lovestone was able to make a number of alliances with the Stalinists — always against the Trotskyist movement.

Cannon described Lovestone's political method:

*"It was everybody's opinion that Lovestone was unscrupulous in his ceaseless machinations and intrigues; and in my opinion*

considerations centered on the advancement of his career, a crude pragmatist and enemy of materialist dialectics, hostile to the struggle for proletarian internationalism which is founded on the whole Marxist world outlook, and politically obsessed with the peculiarities of American capitalism, Lovestone inevitably found his way back to the ruling class.

By the 1940s, Lovestone had dropped all pretensions of being a socialist in order to get a job with the trade union bureaucracy which was then policing the trade unions in the interests of Roosevelt's imperialist war plans. In this right-wing labor bureaucracy Lovestone had finally found his home. Once in the employ of the bureaucracy, Lovestone offered his services to the CIA. Lovestone placed at the disposal of the ruling class everything he ever learned about the revolutionary movement. His star rose very high in Washington, D.C.

He has been and remains to this day George Meany's right-hand man in CIA subversion of the labor movement throughout the world. He can boast that he shares responsibility for the murders of thousands of communists and workers throughout the world.

In Wohlforth, all the characteristics of a Lovestone in the embryonic stage of development can be found: total lack of political principles, unrestrained subjectivism and careerism, hostility to Marxism and Bolshevik democratic-centralism, blatant anti-internationalism, disrespect for the history of the Marxist movement, subservience to the trade union bureaucracy and the capitalist state, and a bitter hatred of the working class.

Without a word of political explanation, Wohlforth deserted the Workers League because its Central Committee maintained that it could not tolerate a violation of revolutionary security and that, therefore, Nancy Fields must be investigated. To have proceeded in any other way would have been a capitulation to the capitalist state and a betrayal of the working class.

Wohlforth then turned to the most dubious revisionist traitors to attack the Workers League and the *International*

Committee of the Fourth International. He did not hesitate to collaborate with GPU accomplice Joseph Hansen and participate wholeheartedly in the witchhunt conducted by the British ruling class against the Workers Revolutionary Party.

Wohlforth has climbed aboard the SWP bandwagon in the frenzied call for the use of federal troops against the working class in Boston. He has denounced the trade unions and advocates the use of the courts against these organizations of the working class.

**All this within the space of 18 months!**

We say categorically that Wohlforth's movement to the right has by no means come to a halt. This is a man who is going places. How much further Wohlforth will travel we do not have to predict. Let it merely be said that his future development will be determined by the needs of the ruling class and the speed with which the crisis develops.

The struggle against Wohlforth represents a milestone in the building of the forces of the International Committee of the Fourth International in the United States. His political exposure has not only immensely strengthened the Workers League, but it has also laid the theoretical foundations for the building of the mass revolutionary party in the United States.

We are not in the least bit disturbed by the hero's welcome accorded to Wohlforth by the revisionists. Let him take his honored place beside the GPU accomplices Hansen and Novack in the leadership of the Socialist Workers Party. That is where he belongs!

But in the Workers League, the struggle against Wohlforth has steeled the cadre of the revolutionary party in an unbending hatred of revisionism. It has provided the political lessons vital for the training of the great new forces of workers, youth and students who will come forward in their thousands to join the revolutionary party.

In conclusion, we state with the greatest confidence that the

struggle against revisionism waged by the Workers League in solidarity with the International Committee of the Fourth International represents the highest stage of the preparation of the working class in the United States and internationally for the world socialist revolution.



# *Correspondence*



## ***From G. Healy to the A.C.F.I.***

24th November 1966

**To: The First National Conference of the A.C.F.I.**

**Dear Comrades,**

On behalf of the Central Committee of the S.L.L. we send you warmest fraternal greetings for the success of your inaugural conference.

The working class in the United States are the most powerful in the world and it is within this class that you must build your party.

This is a basic principle of Marxism and one which applies with particular urgency to the conditions existing inside the United States. It is not Black Power or the dozens of peace and civil rights movements which extend throughout the country which will resolve the basic questions of our time but the working class led by a revolutionary party.

It is at this point that we separate ourselves completely from the revisionists. We emphatically reject their idea that the negroes by themselves as well as middle class movements can settle accounts with American imperialism. Whatever critical support we are called upon from time to time to extend to such movements the essence of our support must be based upon making clear our criticism of their shortcomings.

If we appreciate the role of the working class then we will understand how important it is to wage a continuous struggle

for dialectical materialism as against pragmatism and empirical idealist philosophy.

It will be worse than useless to pay lip service to such a struggle and hope that your movement can muddle along without coming to grips with the basic source of revisionism.

We shall do everything in our power to help you with this struggle. But at your conference we urge you not to evade it. The historical education of the revolutionary party must proceed from an understanding that its day to day difficulties have to be seen as a challenge to the development of Marxist theory. This theory cannot be extended except through the building of the revolutionary party. Every time you come across difficulties, accept that they are a challenge to the extension of Marxist theory. Once we understand this process we shall really succeed in overcoming our difficult problems.

It is not enough to write about the trade unions. All over the metropolitan capitalist countries these organisations are now thrown more and more into a crisis because of the weakening economy of imperialism. This applies to the United States as well as to Britain. We must make every effort to intervene and make contact with all workers who are in struggle within the trade unions.

The contents of your paper show that this is very much appreciated by the A.C.F.I. but please do not forget one important fact. The more you penetrate the trade unions the more you are called upon to tackle the basic questions of the application of dialectical materialism.

It is precisely in these organisations that the ranks of the working class are held back by idealist pragmatism.

The S.W.P. and the Robertson group are in the same revisionist camp. You are the only representative of revolutionary Marxism in the whole of the North American continent today. We are confident that you will take this responsibility as seriously in the future as you have done in the past.

Allow us once again to wish you every success in your con-

ference and to assure you that we will be looking forward with great interest to learning about what you decide.

Yours fraternally,

**G. Healy**  
**National Secretary,**  
**Socialist Labour League**

## ***From G. Healy to Tim Wohlforth***

7th June 1971

Dear Tim,

We have given a lot of thought to your last letter. Here we confine ourselves to the question of the daily paper.

The problem of a daily is not an organizational or a financial one. It concerns the roots of the party in the working class and above all the way in which the party develops its political work within the class, especially in the field of Marxist theory.

Lenin's concept of the daily was always directed towards the working class.

We intended to write about the series of articles against Mandel which were very good in parts. They did, however, reveal certain weaknesses which arise from the isolation between the Workers League and the American working class.

We can discuss these when you come to the camp. One cannot develop dialectical materialism in a struggle against Mandel. It has to be developed out of a continuous contact and struggle within the working class.

This requires a knowledge of the working class born out of experience and not just a propaganda contact with workers. One or two members in unions do not give us a base in the unions. This is essentially a theoretical question which depends on how we train these one or two members and what is their potential as party leaders within their unions and industry.

For a propaganda group there is always the danger of describing trade union work in a formal way, without under-

standing the very deep connection which is necessary. You must avoid window dressing the party with groups of workers whose theoretical level has not been developed and who have not shown mettle in the leadership.

I do not think you can be ready for a daily paper until the situation in the working class movement in the United States provides you with an opportunity to create a base in a number of major cities.

The SLL has this base and this long standing relation. Although it was the youth who provided the possibility for the daily, it could not have emerged if it were not for the relation which the party has with the working class.

It seems to us that you could, without knowing it, be engaged in a propaganda 'one up-manship.' This could not only be a literary approach to the problem of party building but highly dangerous.

You cannot follow the SLL in an automatic way because you get some resources. This has been clearly shown in relation to the youth work.

You tried to build a youth movement following the example of the YS but this has not yet materialised.

Do you now seriously think that you could follow us automatically into laying down a perspective for the role of the daily paper in the trade unions?

You do not as yet have the cadre for this. Enormous resources are required but even if you could get them, the political value of the paper would be negligible if the party's struggle to train cadres in the unions had not matured.

We say that the perspectives of the daily paper cannot be set down on the basis of the economic crisis of American capital. It must be based on the basis of the American working class which arises from the party's work in the working class.

Your paper is at the moment more than adequate to deal with this.

It would be advisable, therefore, not to buy expensive machinery at this moment and to discuss with us when you come here the whole perspective.

You will appreciate that each time we have intervened in the past we have been able together to produce positive results. We are asking you to heed these opinions as you have always done in the past. If not, then you are developing political differences with us on the question of perspective. We are prepared to discuss on this plane if necessary.

Warmest wishes,

Gerry

## **From G. Healy to Tim Wohlforth**

8th June 1971

Dear Tim,

I see from the *Bulletin* this morning that you have made a public announcement on the daily paper and I would have thought that on such a major issue you would have discussed it in advance with us.

This is not just a question of a newspaper but it involves serious political questions concerning the party and the working class. You will make an enormous mistake if you proceed to copy the SLL or in any way to construct a perspective for a daily paper without the Workers League as a whole being clear on its tasks in relation to the unions and the working class. It is in this field that the SLL is very far in front as yet.

Our long history has stood us in good stead despite all the difficulties. You cannot repeat this history without going through at least some of the major experiences that we went through here.

I think it was a mistake to direct your conference along the lines of the daily paper. There are much more sharp political issues confronting your group especially in relation to theory and also there is the big turn which must be made towards the unions. I think you tend to exaggerate your work in this field. Winning over union members and entering unions is only a start. This does not make a proletarian party. Such a movement can only be developed as a result of a sustained

## **From G. Healy to Tim Wohlforth**

June 17, 1971

**Tim Wohlforth  
Labor Publications  
135 W. 14th Street  
6th Floor  
New York City 10011**

**Dear Tim,**

I do not think we can evade major political questions nor can we rationalize them in a way that leaves nothing disturbed. The fact is that a daily paper raises major questions which require a complete change in the theoretical understanding of the Workers League in relation to the working class.

We are the only ones who can help you with this since we have had to pass through such experience ourselves. To have publicly announced the daily paper without at least drawing from our theoretical and practical experience is in fact turning your back on the collective work of the movement. You will learn more about this at the camp when you listen to some of the problems we have.

Contrary to what you say I don't think you are ready for it now, neither are you ready for a campaign. You say it will be possible to get a circulation of 20,000 — maybe so, although I think this will be more difficult than you think, but it's not the main issue.

The essence of pragmatism is to draw from the appearance

of experience here and there in the movement and mechanically apply it to the USA. You think it possible to look at the SLL and then go on and have a daily paper in the USA, that our long practical and theoretical preparation can be overlooked by some political whizz-kids. Let me say you haven't yet begun to have the real fight inside your League.

Alongside the crisis in the SWP you are going to have a tendency towards more and more crisis in your movement. We shall surmount this crisis by turning to the working class not just in theory but in practice. But that process is going to produce a few headaches I think you've overlooked.

Of course we have no intention of discouraging anything you want to undertake. The Workers League has the right to make up its mind but we are certainly pleased you've decided to hold off until the camp.

Hoping to hear from you.

Yours fraternally,

Jerry

## From G. Healy to Tim Wohlforth

24th June 1971

Dear Tim,

The launching of the *Workers Press* took place after almost 40 years struggle to penetrate the working class movement in Britain.

We had already by September 1969 succeeded in training a number of trade union cadres, since especially 1966.

Following the expulsion of the Young Socialists in 1964 from the Labour Party, we turned towards the unions and it took five years work, not just to get into the unions, but to bring out inside the SLL the major political differences in the fight against idealism.

Work had already been going on here from the early 1960s. The *Workers Press* emerged at a high point of the political crisis inside the SLL. It was this crisis which made it possible because it established a relationship with the problems of the class in the field of theory.

All the time we built up the resources for the press we were locked in crisis. The practical plans and achievements were **secondary** to this crisis.

As we see it the dialectical essence of building a party is to continuously sharpen the internal conflict to the point of frustration, as it were, then to take the essence of this experience through our practice into the workers' movement in the unions and negate it into the problems we encounter there.

Only in this way do we gradually assimilate the essential

knowledge for the "leap" in the workers' movement and our own ranks.

The fight for the "daily" means sharpening the conflict in our own ranks, preparatory to the "leap" in the working class. But this is what makes it very hard and protracted.

The "daily" is an enormous leap for us, so the theoretical crisis which precedes it will be most severe. You have barely started with this crisis. Any propagandistic campaign for a daily will simply cover it up, as you quite correctly point out. But it is important to grasp the dialectic of this process. Even if you had a number of leading trade unionists you would still have to go through this consciously projected crisis.

It is not true that the *Workers Press* was a nationalist undertaking, neither is it true that your daily will be the pure results of an "internationalist" orientation. You are being a formalist here.

Lenin set the pace for a daily paper orientation to the working class in the early 1920s but this was the outcome of a philosophical struggle within the Bolshevik Party (*Volume 38*). We took this into account here, not in a repetitive way but in the course of real internal conflict.

It is this tradition of conflict between "idealism and Marxism" which the international gives to the Workers League. The other thing you will do — that is your positive side. We don't tell you what to do, as such. We advise you to see the "daily" as the outcome of a conscious theoretical conflict launched by us inside our own ranks.

There is a long way to go yet in the Workers League. Yes, our camp will help, but the job lies in the USA.

Yours fraternally,

G. Healy

## *From Dany Sylveire to Tim Wohlforth*

January 19, 1972

Dear Tim,

Your letter (14th Dec. 71) has been passed over to me for immediate attention. Gerry has seen this reply and endorsed it.

The struggle against idealism has to be a continuous process in the party, not a sporadic outburst when things begin to explode in front of you. The center of this must of course be within the leadership of the movement: it was this that came up in relation to the Political Committee a year ago but was only grasped empirically. The growth of the Workers League over the past year, and now the youth movement, have only heightened this process, leading to the danger of complacency.

If we analyze and understand the depth of this crisis, which shakes the system from top to bottom, then we must also grasp that the break up of 27 years of boom must also have its reflection within the movement. An understanding of the significance of August 15th has to be struggled for continuously, which involves us in a struggle for a dialectical method against all those who want to proceed with an idealist method. Such a struggle has to be waged within the SLL also.

This is not a struggle that can be dealt with or solved through organizational or disciplinary measures, but it must become the very lifeblood of the movement. What the revisionists and the OCI all run away from is this contradictory struggle for theory.

Precisely at the point where the party makes a turn, in the development of the youth movement, all the idealists come into conflict with this. The struggle to make a turn into the youth in Britain required a long protracted political struggle within the SLL starting within its leadership against propagandism, which lasted for at least a decade. The development and training of a cadre in the youth movement could not have taken place without this political conflict. Had we prematurely removed those who reflected this idealist opposition to the youth movement from the leadership the richness of theoretical development out of this struggle would have been cut off.

It is not, as you say in your letter, a question of "the Political Committee and National Committee could not simply be left be." It is a question of how we wage that political fight within the PC and NC. If you eliminate one of the opposites within these committees *before* a struggle takes place you in fact *are* leaving the PC and NC be. Previous to the National Conference, it was clear that that political struggle had not been taken up, then you empirically react to this by removing them from the NC. This is a mistake and can only weaken the movement. The youth that you replace them with, are as yet unknown quantities, and will have to be trained. You will face similar problems with them, and if you have not taken them through the experience of a struggle with this older layer in the party their development will be one-sided. All new developments can only come from within the old forms in a conflict against the old forms. They can only be educated in this conflict with older layers in the party, therefore there must for a period be a co-existence in the party of the new and the older layers in conflict. It requires a movement of the working class to enable this process to break through. The development of the party cadres is intimately bound up with the development of the class struggle. On our own Central Committee we went through many years of struggle with the idealists, and hardly ever did we take any such decisions. They do not solve the problem — and we recognize that it is through this conflict of opposites that development takes place.

It is dangerous to see only the *form* of the achievements of the SLL without understanding the *content* of political struggle behind them. It is precisely the hard, many times frustrating points of struggle which have been the motive force for the deepest developments and leaps forward. This is what Gerry meant when he spoke at the camp of dialectical materialism and Lenin's *Philosophical Notebooks*. This is what the revisionists and OCI opportunistically reject. The fact that there has been no struggle in the leadership can only lead to this explosion. Why be surprised about it? In order to change that, to develop theory, it requires a change in practice: a conscious struggle in the leadership of the movement.

You have put Comrade ... onto the NC. If this is Comrade ... from Brownsville; before I left the States you were writing him off almost, which also was an incorrect and superficial estimation of him. Now, a few days later, he is put onto the NC!

The Workers League has reached a decisive point in its development, but to understand this is not to panic or talk of "open warfare" but to see that struggle in all its contradictions.

Yours fraternally,

Dany Sylveire

## **From G. Healy to Tim Wohlforth**

London

Tuesday, February 8, 1972

Dear Tim,

Sorry about the delay in replying to your letters. Dany wrote to you and expressed our opinions on a number of matters to which you replied you are going "more deeply" into them. I had been at a loss to know what "more deeply" meant until reading Fred's article on the SWP in the January 31 *Bulletin*. He says: "The pragmatist and empiricist see only the surface, not the underlying essence."

This is only the other side of the idealism of the SWP. Whilst correctly reflecting the empirical method of one-sidedly analyzing the appearance of events it jumps incorrectly to the equally idealist conclusion that some "underlying essence" comes from the background of events — a leap from idealism to idealistic mysticism. In reality essence must be abstracted from the conflict between the past (abstract) and the present (concrete). The absolute in both cases is the movement (change) which is the class struggle. Essence is an abstraction (theory) which must be taken into our practice (concrete). This is a contradictory, conflicting process. It means that we experience the conflict in our efforts to take theory into practice via the class struggle. The education of a cadre is rooted in this

dialectical process and not in "impressionism" and the search  
for "deeper explanations."

Warm regards,

Jerry

## From G. Healy to Tim Wohlforth

London

September 25th 1972

Dear Tim,

Boy, have we got the revisionists going on philosophy. After reading Hansen's throwaway with Novack's latest, I feel elated. It is certain that all our work on movement and the contradiction of movement at the camp was really worthwhile. To Warde, empiricism, Hegelianism and Marxism are a process of the simple philosophical evolution of one into the other. He eliminates contradiction (conflict) between the abstract and the concrete, or as Lenin quotes Hegel further upon the same page: "To hold fast the positive in its negative" — but this is the conflict of opposites. At the bottom of the next page 227, again Lenin quotes Hegel when he refers to this contradiction. On Page 228 he sharply criticizes him for conceiving of this **outside the object** (without mutual contact). In a box on the same page he says: "The crux lies in the fact that thought must apprehend the whole 'representation' in its movement, but for **that thought** must be dialectical." Thought is a "conflict of opposites" because it must *apprehend* the representation in its movement — **movement is contradiction**, that is "past into present" or vice versa.

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## ***From G. Healy to Tim Wohlforth***

Friday, December 22, 1972

Dear Comrade Tim,

We read your article on "Max Shachtman and American Pragmatism" (*Bulletin*, December 4). We are not in agreement with the way in which you confront the history of the movement or the manner in which you approach and defend the materialist dialectic. We consider this pragmatic.

We could never permit questions which concern the theoretical bases of our movement to pass unobserved, more so today, in the period of the deepest crisis of the capitalist system, where the most decisive task is the training of revolutionary cadres on the principles and method of Marxism. That is why we cannot help but oppose the manner in which you confront this question.

You write that "Shachtman died a traitor to his class and a counter-revolutionary." No one can dispute this. But you add, "That is the long and short of it." This phrase itself seems at once paradoxical because Shachtman didn't just die, he also lived.

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## ***From G. Healy to Tim Wohlforth***

**June 17, 1971**

**Tim Wohlforth  
Labor Publications  
135 W. 14th Street  
6th Floor  
New York City 10011**

**Dear Tim,**

**I do not think we can evade major political questions nor can we rationalize them in a way that leaves nothing disturbed. The fact is that a daily paper raises major questions which require a complete change in the theoretical understanding of the Workers League in relation to the working class.**

**We are the only ones who can help you with this since we have had to pass through such experience ourselves. To have publicly announced the daily paper without at least drawing from our theoretical and practical experience is in fact turning your back on the collective work of the movement. You will learn more about this at the camp when you listen to some of the problems we have.**

**Contrary to what you say I don't think you are ready for it now, neither are you ready for a campaign. You say it will be possible to get a circulation of 20,000 — maybe so, although I think this will be more difficult than you think, but it's not the main issue.**

**The essence of pragmatism is to draw from the appearance**

of experience here and there in the movement and mechanically apply it to the USA. You think it possible to look at the SLL and then go on and have a daily paper in the USA, that our long practical and theoretical preparation can be overlooked by some political whizz-kids. Let me say you haven't yet begun to have the real fight inside your League.

Alongside the crisis in the SWP you are going to have a tendency towards more and more crisis in your movement. We shall surmount this crisis by turning to the working class not just in theory but in practice. But that process is going to produce a few headaches I think you've overlooked.

Of course we have no intention of discouraging anything you want to undertake. The Workers League has the right to make up its mind but we are certainly pleased you've decided to hold off until the camp.

Hoping to hear from you.

Yours fraternally,

**Jerry**

## From G. Healy to Tim Wohlforth

24th June 1971

Dear Tim,

The launching of the *Workers Press* took place after almost 40 years struggle to penetrate the working class movement in Britain.

We had already by September 1969 succeeded in training a number of trade union cadres, since especially 1966.

Following the expulsion of the Young Socialists in 1964 from the Labour Party, we turned towards the unions and it took five years work, not just to get into the unions, but to bring out inside the SLL the major political differences in the fight against idealism.

Work had already been going on here from the early 1960s. The *Workers Press* emerged at a high point of the political crisis inside the SLL. It was this crisis which made it possible because it established a relationship with the problems of the class in the field of theory.

All the time we built up the resources for the press we were locked in crisis. The practical plans and achievements were **secondary** to this crisis.

As we see it the dialectical essence of building a party is to continuously sharpen the internal conflict to the point of frustration, as it were, then to take the essence of this experience through our practice into the workers' movement in the unions and negate it into the problems we encounter there.

Only in this way do we gradually assimilate the essential

knowledge for the "leap" in the workers' movement and our own ranks.

The fight for the "daily" means sharpening the conflict in our own ranks, preparatory to the "leap" in the working class. But this is what makes it very hard and protracted.

The "daily" is an enormous leap for us, so the theoretical crisis which precedes it will be most severe. You have barely started with this crisis. Any propagandistic campaign for a daily will simply cover it up, as you quite correctly point out. But it is important to grasp the dialectic of this process. Even if you had a number of leading trade unionists you would still have to go through this consciously projected crisis.

It is not true that the *Workers Press* was a nationalist undertaking, neither is it true that your daily will be the pure results of an "internationalist" orientation. You are being a formalist here.

Lenin set the pace for a daily paper orientation to the working class in the early 1920s but this was the outcome of a philosophical struggle within the Bolshevik Party (*Volume 38*). We took this into account here, not in a repetitive way but in the course of real internal conflict.

It is this tradition of conflict between "idealism and Marxism" which the international gives to the Workers League. The other thing you will do — that is your positive side. We don't tell you what to do, as such. We advise you to see the "daily" as the outcome of a conscious theoretical conflict launched by us inside our own ranks.

There is a long way to go yet in the Workers League. Yes, our camp will help, but the job lies in the USA.

Yours fraternally,

G. Healy

## *From Dany Sylveire to Tim Wohlforth*

January 19, 1972

Dear Tim,

Your letter (14th Dec. 71) has been passed over to me for immediate attention. Gerry has seen this reply and endorsed it.

The struggle against idealism has to be a continuous process in the party, not a sporadic outburst when things begin to explode in front of you. The center of this must of course be within the leadership of the movement: it was this that came up in relation to the Political Committee a year ago but was only grasped empirically. The growth of the Workers League over the past year, and now the youth movement, have only heightened this process, leading to the danger of complacency.

If we analyze and understand the depth of this crisis, which shakes the system from top to bottom, then we must also grasp that the break up of 27 years of boom must also have its reflection within the movement. An understanding of the significance of August 15th has to be struggled for continuously, which involves us in a struggle for a dialectical method against all those who want to proceed with an idealist method. Such a struggle has to be waged within the SLL also.

This is not a struggle that can be dealt with or solved through organizational or disciplinary measures, but it must become the very lifeblood of the movement. What the revisionists and the OCI all run away from is this contradictory struggle for theory.

Precisely at the point where the party makes a turn, in the development of the youth movement, all the idealists come into conflict with this. The struggle to make a turn into the youth in Britain required a long protracted political struggle within the SLL starting within its leadership against propagandism, which lasted for at least a decade. The development and training of a cadre in the youth movement could not have taken place without this political conflict. Had we prematurely removed those who reflected this idealist opposition to the youth movement from the leadership the richness of theoretical development out of this struggle would have been cut off.

It is not, as you say in your letter, a question of "the Political Committee and National Committee could not simply be left be." It is a question of how we wage that political fight within the PC and NC. If you eliminate one of the opposites within these committees *before* a struggle takes place you in fact *are* leaving the PC and NC be. Previous to the National Conference, it was clear that that political struggle had not been taken up, then you empirically react to this by removing them from the NC. This is a mistake and can only weaken the movement. The youth that you replace them with, are as yet unknown quantities, and will have to be trained. You will face similar problems with them, and if you have not taken them through the experience of a struggle with this older layer in the party their development will be one-sided. All new developments can only come from within the old forms in a conflict against the old forms. They can only be educated in this conflict with older layers in the party, therefore there must for a period be a co-existence in the party of the new and the older layers in conflict. It requires a movement of the working class to enable this process to break through. The development of the party cadres is intimately bound up with the development of the class struggle. On our own Central Committee we went through many years of struggle with the idealists, and hardly ever did we take any such decisions. They do not solve the problem — and we recognize that it is through this conflict of opposites that development takes place.

It is dangerous to see only the *form* of the achievements of the SLL without understanding the *content* of political struggle behind them. It is precisely the hard, many times frustrating points of struggle which have been the motive force for the deepest developments and leaps forward. This is what Gerry meant when he spoke at the camp of dialectical materialism and Lenin's *Philosophical Notebooks*. This is what the revisionists and OCI opportunistically reject. The fact that there has been no struggle in the leadership can only lead to his explosion. Why be surprised about it? In order to change that, to develop theory, it requires a change in practice: a conscious struggle in the leadership of the movement.

You have put Comrade ... onto the NC. If this is Comrade ... from Brownsville; before I left the States you were writing him off almost, which also was an incorrect and superficial estimation of him. Now, a few days later, he is put onto the NC!

The Workers League has reached a decisive point in its development, but to understand this is not to panic or talk of "open warfare" but to see that struggle in all its contradictions.

Yours fraternally,

Dany Sylveire

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ter, is true, but not that the latter "detracts from" the former.

If you must take advantage of the "divine gift of inconsistency" (as Trotsky called it) and advance together with the above thesis, Shachtman's indifference to the dialectic and his defeatism towards the USSR, you would also have to deny the struggle for building the revolutionary party in the USA.

Maybe this observation seems to concern an unimportant detail. But this detail does not lack essence, or rather it reveals the loss of essence. Shachtman himself, like Burnham and Abern, was unable to conceive this basic element of the dialectic.

Do we perhaps have to recall that they sceptically "detracted from" the workers' state of the USSR because it had deteriorated into a state of degeneration and was dominated by the Stalinist bureaucracy?

For these reasons we cannot understand the attitude of cavalier indifference to the contribution of Shachtman to the development of a Trotskyist movement in the early 1930s. Trotsky while critical of his theoretical inconsistency nevertheless valued his journalistic skill and made every possible attempt to try and integrate Shachtman more fully into the party.

He did this not only by insisting on a thorough study of dialectical materialism but — equally significant — he demanded that petit-bourgeois intelligentsia involve themselves in revolutionary practice. Let us recall his advice to Cannon:

"You have for example an important number of Jewish non-worker elements in your ranks. They can be a very valuable yeast **if the party succeeds by and by in extracting them from a closed milieu** and ties them to the factory workers by daily activity. I believe such an orientation would assure a more healthy atmosphere inside the party."

Shachtman's failure to break from the concept of a closed-circle petit-bourgeois discussion club, his consistent refusal to turn the face of the *Socialist Appeal* and the *New International* actively towards the working class vanguard contributed largely towards his disorientation and ultimate desertion from the SWP.

However, you do not criticize Shachtman from this standpoint, you merely compare him to Lovestone — an incorrigible right-wing Stalinist who always opposed Trotsky and the SWP. It would be instructive if you would read what Lenin had to say in this respect about Malinovsky, who unlike Shachtman was a provocateur. It is not only the evil that men do that lives after them.

We also object to the comparison between the Shachtman who opposed Trotsky in 1939 and the Shachtman who supported Hubert Humphrey in 1972. By 1972 Shachtman had rejected the dialectic completely — he was not merely indifferent to it — he had replaced it with a thoroughgoing hatred of Marxism and the working class.

Your article not only ignores the essential contradictions but also substitutes a purely metaphysical argument for the materialist dialectic. This is clearly apparent in the following extract:

“It is not enough to adhere to the correct line, formulated by others, and to utilize one’s talents to effectively propagate it. Every revolutionist must begin with Marxist theory and on this basis start at all times from the working class, its problems, its situation, and its development.”

It is not us who start “from the working class,” its “problems,” its “situation,” and its “development.” We always set out from the absolute and fundamental contradiction within the capitalist system: the class struggle.

If Shachtman and Burnham, like the other SWP leaders who fought at Trotsky’s side in 1940, degenerated, this is because they were unable to grasp the dialectic. But this, more concretely, meant the inability to conceive, in all phenomena and processes of the mind and society, their contradictory and mutually exclusive parts: the source of self-movement, of leaps, or the transformation into its opposite, etc.

This was not a personal inability of theirs, but was always the “Achilles” heel, especially of the American revolutionary movement. Trotsky always drew the attention of his comrades

to this point. To explain the deeper causes of this phenomenon, he wrote:

"The secret is simple. In no other country has there been such rejection of the class struggle as in the land of 'unlimited opportunity.' The denial of the social contradictions as the moving force of development led to the denial of the dialectic as the logic of contradictions in the domain of theoretical thought."

When you say that revolutionaries must start out from the working class and its problems, this means that you have not drawn from Trotsky's struggle against Shachtman and the latter's degeneration the necessary lessons. At another point you write:

"To fail to battle to break from the methodological thinking of the capitalist class means going over to the political positions of the capitalist class as Shachtman did. One cannot break out of the facts of capitalism to bring the struggle for socialism into the present struggle of the working class."

But the "facts of capitalism" are nothing other than the class struggle! How is it possible for us to set as a condition for the assimilation of the dialectic a "break" from the class struggle?

We are opposed to the impressionist attachment of the revisionists to the "facts" but not in this way. The dialectic is not something abstract, it is not a "science of thought," higher and more abstract than pragmatism. It is "the logic of contradictions in the domain of theoretical thought."

Here is what Lenin quotes from Hegel in his *Notebooks*:

"The absolute method does not behave as external reflection; it draws the determinate element directly from its object itself, since it is the object's immanent principle and soul. It was this that Plato demanded of cognition, that it should *consider things in and for themselves*, and while partly considering them in their universality, it should also hold fast to them, not catching at externals, examples and comparisons, but contemplating the things alone and bringing before consciousness what is immanent in them." (*Volume 38*, p. 220)

Surely what is demanded is not a break from the "facts of capitalism" but on the contrary a break from the routine of everyday relationships. The class struggle is the starting point and the field where we apply and develop our theoretical weapons, in the fight against bourgeois ideology and its agents within the working class movement. Schools, brochures, and articles on the dialectic constitute only one part of this struggle for the training of revolutionary cadres.

All the above observations are not concerned with deficiencies of an article but with real problems in our movement — and not only in America.

Is the absence of documents concerning the perspectives of the class struggle from the *Bulletin* perhaps not related to these problems? The character of our work is reflected in our press, and we would like to see our work transformed, based theoretically and practically on the class struggle. We believe that the fight for this transformation is the most urgent task of the leadership of our American section today.

Yours Fraternally,

G. Healy

On behalf of the  
International Committee

## ***From Mike Banda to Tim Wohlforth***

February, 1973

Dear Tim:

Central to the US perspectives is an understanding of the liquidity crisis which expresses the insoluble contradiction between world productive forces and the national state.

Put briefly it is this: the US emerged from the war as the strongest industrial and financial power with the highest hoard of gold. It had a substantial surplus in its balance of payments and a strong balance of trade.

But this position could not last indefinitely. As America rebuilt Europe with loans and grants and as the import surpluses of the war-devastated countries began to decline, the huge surpluses on the US balance of payments began to decline.

This situation was aggravated by the rapid increase in the outflow of private funds particularly in the late '50s ( \$3 billion annually). The establishment of the EEC, easing of exchange restrictions and currency convertibility gave a fillip to US investments. Europe and Canada — not Latin America took first place in the scale of US foreign investments.

Private funds plus US government transfers of military aid either in the form of currency or goods added to the strain on the US balance of payments — at the same time it added to the growth of fictitious accumulation in Europe and with it in-

flation. From the early '50s onwards the US began to accumulate deficits and not surpluses on its external account.

At the beginning the deficit was considered indispensable for the functioning of the Bretton Woods system. As a result world trade — and the competitive position of powers like Germany and Japan grew rapidly.

The main source of international liquidity was the dollar and this was the Achilles Heel of the IMF and GATT. In order to facilitate world trade countries had to accumulate reserves of foreign currency — namely dollars — but this could be done only on condition that the US ran a continuous deficit on her balance of payments which enabled European nations to transform their export surpluses into liquid dollar holdings. This deficit, however, began to reach unmanageable proportions when the US direct private investments in Europe began to reach the \$3 billion mark in the late '50s.

This investment was directly related to the fall in profit rates in the USA and the huge growth of parasitic paper claims on an ever diminishing profit rate in US economy.

But the crunch began when, simultaneously with the increase in US investment, the European central banks began to change their inflationary dollars into gold. This was the direct result of the deficit which in turn was supposed to be the *sine qua non* of monetary stability. Consequently the US stock of gold fell from \$25 billion in 1950 to \$10.5 billion in 1968.

Here two points arise:

1) Accumulated value of outstanding dollar liabilities is twice as large as the US gold hoard. This was OK up to August 15, 1971 — convertibility of dollar claims into gold was at least theoretically assured. This is now no more. This has led to a crisis of confidence, to pressure on the dollar and devaluation which, in turn, increases the conversion of dollars into gold, thereby increasing the uncertainty in dollars leading to more devaluations, etc.

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unemployed, those on relief, etc.

This is not New Dealism in any sense; it is the institutionalization of "Fortress America" — the ante-chamber of World War III.

On Stalinism, I think the section (28) needs expanding. Stalinism is in crisis. It is true that Moscow and Peking did terrible things in Vietnam and we shall continue to expose and denounce their crimes — but they were unable to smash or effectively undermine the NLF. The civil war goes on. In this sense the crisis of Stalinism refracts the enormous weakness of world imperialism. I think the perspective document must infuse comrades with a confidence in the ability of the movement to smash capitalism.

On Section 33, I think it is important to show how revisionism aided Stalinism throughout the anti-war campaign — even when the SWP differed with the Stalinists. In particular, we must bring out the anti-working class, anti-socialist position of the SWP-YSA cabal on the war.

On Section 38, I think it would be wiser to err on the side of caution and not run in immediately with calls for Councils of Action. It is not the same situation as in Britain. Your definition of the tasks of these committees is imprecise — even vague. I think it is more important to concentrate on building the YS and caucuses within the trade unions on the line of building the Labor Party.

To conceive of developments in the US as proceeding only by "leaps" is wrong and dangerously so. There will not only be "leaps" but also plenty of hard, unspectacular slogging against the Stalinists and revisionists which will require great theoretical firmness and tactical skill. While in general we can talk about "organizations which reach out very broadly and openly to all layers of the working class," that is hardly the task which confronts the Workers League now in the US.

The task is to organize and win over the vanguard of the working class to Trotskyism and lay the basis for the revolutionary party.

world's gold. The increase in gold supply only amounts to 2 percent per year and this is totally insufficient to meet the requirements of the international monetary system. Hence the only way — under the present system — is for countries to increase their dollar holdings — but, as a result, they increase the deficit in the US balance of payments! So long as the dollar serves as the only form — virtually — of international liquidity, next to gold, then this problem will persist. The only way out for capitalism is to set up an alternative reserve currency based on the European hoard of gold, **but this is absolutely impossible.**

The enlarged EEC cannot do this because of the national contradictions and rivalries, etc. A single currency in any case presupposes a single government, a single budget and a single banking system.

Moreover, the short term capital market must tear itself free from the mountain of Eurodollars which dominates it. This is a hopeless task for European capitalism. The more the Europeans try to break out of this impasse — the more securely they get stuck in the quicksands of inflation and civil war.

Whereas in the past the US only wanted to subordinate and exploit Europe, now, because of the unique nature of the problem they feel compelled to eliminate Europe and Japan.

We can understand the strategy of Nixon only from this standpoint. If the accumulated deficit was allowed to continue on the scale which it did in the last four to five years then there is little doubt that the US bourgeoisie would not only have to end the remnants of the welfare state, they would also have had to introduce huge redundancies in industry and agriculture.

This would have led to a revolutionary situation in the States. Nixon's economic policy — Phase one and two — in this sense cannot be separated from his August 15 measures. They are aimed at securing the cooperation of the trade union leaders in the trade war against Europe and Japan while tightening the screw against unorganized labor such as the

The tasks of the *Bulletin* too are not sufficiently amplified. It must be the collective propagandist, agitator and organizer of the party. Its task is to develop and keep before the working class the perspective of socialist power.

At present the *Bulletin* does not do this. There is too much agitation and very little Marxist propaganda in it — not enough articles on questions like Vietnam, the economic crisis, the monopolies, inflation etc. I think that the paper poses the task of training a cadre of Marxist writers — not just reporter-agitators.

Yours fraternally,

Mike

P.S. Other members of the IC have not sent me any comments yet. If they do I shall forward them to you.

## *From Mike Banda to Tim Wohlforth*

February, 1973

Dear Tim:

Central to the US perspectives is an understanding of the liquidity crisis which expresses the insoluble contradiction between world productive forces and the national state.

Put briefly it is this: the US emerged from the war as the strongest industrial and financial power with the highest hoard of gold. It had a substantial surplus in its balance of payments and a strong balance of trade.

But this position could not last indefinitely. As America rebuilt Europe with loans and grants and as the import surpluses of the war-devastated countries began to decline, the huge surpluses on the US balance of payments began to decline.

This situation was aggravated by the rapid increase in the outflow of **private** funds particularly in the late '50s ( \$3 billion annually). The establishment of the EEC, easing of exchange restrictions and currency convertibility gave a fillip to US investments. Europe and Canada — not Latin America took first place in the scale of US foreign investments.

Private funds plus US government transfers of military aid either in the form of currency or goods added to the strain on the US balance of payments — at the same time it added to the growth of fictitious accumulation in Europe and with it in-

flation. From the early '50s onwards the US began to accumulate deficits and not surpluses on its external account.

At the beginning the deficit was considered indispensable for the functioning of the Bretton Woods system. As a result world trade — and the competitive position of powers like Germany and Japan grew rapidly.

The main source of international liquidity was the dollar and this was the Achilles Heel of the IMF and GATT. In order to facilitate world trade countries had to accumulate reserves of foreign currency — namely dollars — but this could be done only on condition that the US ran a continuous deficit on her balance of payments which enabled European nations to transform their export surpluses into liquid dollar holdings. This deficit, however, began to reach unmanageable proportions when the US direct private investments in Europe began to reach the \$3 billion mark in the late '50s.

This investment was directly related to the fall in profit rates in the USA and the huge growth of parasitic paper claims on an ever diminishing profit rate in US economy.

But the crunch began when, simultaneously with the increase in US investment, the European central banks began to change their inflationary dollars into gold. This was the direct result of the deficit which in turn was supposed to be the *sine qua non* of monetary stability. Consequently the US stock of gold fell from \$25 billion in 1950 to \$10.5 billion in 1968.

Here two points arise:

- 1) Accumulated value of outstanding dollar liabilities is twice as large as the US gold hoard. This was OK up to August 15, 1971 — convertibility of dollar claims into gold was at least theoretically assured. This is now no more. This has led to a crisis of confidence, to pressure on the dollar and devaluation which, in turn, increases the conversion of dollars into gold, thereby increasing the uncertainty in dollars leading to more devaluations, etc.

- 2) This coincides with and is compounded by a more general problem of international liquidity and the distribution of the

world's gold. The increase in gold supply only amounts to 2 percent per year and this is totally insufficient to meet the requirements of the international monetary system. Hence the only way — under the present system — is for countries to increase their dollar holdings — but, as a result, they increase the deficit in the US balance of payments! So long as the dollar serves as the only form — virtually — of international liquidity, next to gold, then this problem will persist. The only way out for capitalism is to set up an alternative reserve currency based on the European hoard of gold, **but this is absolutely impossible.**

The enlarged EEC cannot do this because of the national contradictions and rivalries, etc. A single currency in any case presupposes a single government, a single budget and a single banking system.

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unemployed, those on relief, etc.

This is not New Dealism in any sense; it is the institutionalization of "Fortress America" — the ante-chamber of World War III.

On Stalinism, I think the section (28) needs expanding. Stalinism is in crisis. It is true that Moscow and Peking did terrible things in Vietnam and we shall continue to expose and denounce their crimes — but they were unable to smash or effectively undermine the NLF. The civil war goes on. In this sense the crisis of Stalinism refracts the enormous weakness of world imperialism. I think the perspective document must infuse comrades with a confidence in the ability of the movement to smash capitalism.

On Section 33, I think it is important to show how revisionism aided Stalinism throughout the anti-war campaign — even when the SWP differed with the Stalinists. In particular, we must bring out the anti-working class, anti-socialist position of the SWP-YSA cabal on the war.

On Section 38, I think it would be wiser to err on the side of caution and not run in immediately with calls for Councils of Action. It is not the same situation as in Britain. Your definition of the tasks of these committees is imprecise — even vague. I think it is more important to concentrate on building the YS and caucuses within the trade unions on the line of building the Labor Party.

To conceive of developments in the US as proceeding only by "leaps" is wrong and dangerously so. There will not only be "leaps" but also plenty of hard, unspectacular slogging against the Stalinists and revisionists which will require great theoretical firmness and tactical skill. While in general we can talk about "organizations which reach out very broadly and openly to all layers of the working class," that is hardly the task which confronts the Workers League now in the US.

The task is to organize and win over the **vanguard** of the working class to Trotskyism and lay the basis for the revolutionary party.

The tasks of the *Bulletin* too are not sufficiently amplified. It must be the collective propagandist, agitator and organizer of the party. Its task is to develop and keep before the working class the perspective of socialist power.

At present the *Bulletin* does not do this. There is too much agitation and very little Marxist propaganda in it — not enough articles on questions like Vietnam, the economic crisis, the monopolies, inflation etc. I think that the paper poses the task of training a cadre of Marxist writers — not just reporter-agitators.

Yours fraternally,

Mike

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## From G. Healy to Tim Wohlforth

June 4, 1973

Dear Tim:

The report on your lecture "20 Years of the IC" which appeared in the *Bulletin* May 28th raises some important questions of method.

In 1963, it would appear, that the "motives" of the Socialist Labour League were to seek "to maintain discussion by exhausting every possibility to avoid a split." Towards this end, the article implies, "in 1963 the Socialist Labour League proposed the setting up a parity commission with the SWP."

In 1966 at the Third Congress of the IC it seems that this policy of sweet reasonableness obliged us to commit some errors which you quote:

"'But the documents of the 1966 Conference reflect the difficulties that existed between the SLL and the French. Certain concessions were made by referring to the "reconstruction" of the Fourth International'."

In a lecture dealing with Philosophy it is a mistake to examine our past history from the standpoint of "motives." Engels in *Feuerbach* emphasized that although these do exist in the minds of men, and they certainly existed in ours, that in the making of history they play a secondary role. The things that men set out to do always emerge eventually in the form of a surprise, which is very different from what they originally anticipated. And there is no doubt that we experienced this surprise over and over again during the last twenty years.

If anyone had told me in 1953 during the heat of the battle with Pabloism that ten years later we would be breaking just as definitively from the SWP as we did from Pablo, I would not have believed them. Yet less than eight years later in the February of 1961 (not 1963) we were proposing the "Parity Committee" in order to smoke out the behind the scenes, unprincipled agreement for what in the autumn of 1963 turned into an unprincipled unification between Mandel, Novack, Hansen *et al.* The fact is that in these eight years the SLL and the SWP became irreconcilable opposites within the IC and co-existed from roughly 1957 onwards simply because dialectically we were "holding fast the opposites" in motion and conflict, although we were not conscious of it then.

This experience was fraught with tension, and hidden conflict.

At the end of November 1958 and again in February 1960 I visited Canada to confer with SWP leaders, but despite the outward cordial relations, the visits solved nothing. By the middle of 1961 you and we were working together on a course which led to a split in 1963, and your expulsion from the SWP in the summer of 1964.

The OCI and the SLL were "opposites" within the IC for a much longer period, looking back now, I would say from the founding of the IC in October 1953.

We certainly tried to hold fast the opposites here during the 1950s.

I faithfully reported back to the OCI all the talks we had with the SWP, warning them of the dangers ahead. For a time we enjoyed reasonably close working relations. After 1963, we continuously advised them on youth work, finance etc. I can assure you it was done from the best possible political motives, but the result which emerged from 1966 onwards was almost the opposite of what we had worked for.

Our "motive" was based on the assumption that if they got fresh forces from the youth that this would create the material basis for change among the old centrist, syndicalistically-minded leaders. But it did the opposite. The period of the

“great protest” had begun and the middle class youth with some young workers flocked into the OCI. Almost immediately they coalesced around the old leaders. From there on, opportunistically speaking, they politically not only went to hell on bicycles, they did their damndest to smash us down on the way.

Once again we headed for split from the best of all “motives” to preserve “unity” within the IC. It can be seen from these experiences that the dialectical method of “holding fast” the opposites is immensely superior in judging our history than the subjective idealist method of “motives.” Within the material conditions of the class struggle the “opposites” themselves change and it is only through analyzing the “transition” of this change within its dialectical materialist content that we can really explain and learn from our mistakes over this period, and not I repeat from “motives.”

In the second part of your lecture you provide the explanation for the error. You say:

“One must begin with the positive of the new experience of the struggle and the changing objective developments and negate them with the program.”

The word “negate” here is used in the wrong context. We are constantly positing the experience of our practice in the living present on the abstract program. These are opposites. We seek to actualize this program in practice by holding fast these “opposites” in conflict and from this conflict we negate the abstract essence which is then taken into positive living practice. The negation or essence comes out of the conflict and **not** before.

A little further on you become more explicit: “It is through abstract thought that man grapples consciously with contradiction.” Really? But all “abstract thought” is without vitality and lifeless as a thing in itself. It is only when its “other” that is the living present is posited on it, that man can grapple with contradiction. He is obliged to go from the present into the past.

“The study of Hegel,” you say, “is so decisive, because in

almost every sentence, contradiction is expressed." Here is a source of dangerous confusion.

The eighteenth century conflict between mechanical materialism and idealism led to the progress of idealism: that of Critical Philosophy and the dialectical method (Hegel). Out of this conflict came the dialectical materialism of Marx in which both the old mechanical materialism and the dialectical idealism of Hegel was destroyed and at the same time both preserved, one in its dialectical form and the other in its materialist (matter in motion) positive content. The relative truth in materialism lay in matter in motion (objective dialectics) as distinct from the old mechanical metaphysical form.

To sensuously understand "contradiction" we must avoid the trap of the dialectical "idealism" (contradiction in form) of Hegel and turn to Marxism which enables us to grasp the unity and conflict of opposites (dialectical form and materialist substance) within dialectical materialism itself.

True enough, you quote Lenin's correction of Hegel, but this would make matters worse. Pragmatic selection leading to eclectic presentation has got nothing to do with Marxism. It simply provides us with a very old patch quilt, which if used as a political bedspread during lectures will confuse everybody.

Finally you remark that "in order to establish mutual contact between opposites it is vital to understand what it is that brings about the conflict in the materialist world." This is the source of your confusion about "motives." We don't start with "mutual contact between opposites" as such but with the material world of the class struggle from which we abstract the opposites through the struggle between theory and practice in which the latter is primary. We begin from the living class struggle of today to understand our past history.

This class struggle proceeds in a material world of continuous movement and change. The form which our cognition of this world takes is the abstract side of contradiction. The positive side of contradiction is our practice. Thus theory and practice constitute a unity and conflict of opposites. From this

unity and conflict of opposites, through our practice we discover the inner laws of the ever-changing materialist content of the class struggle. We posit this practice on our abstract theory and program, hold fast the opposites in conflict and out of this conflict negate the essence which is then taken into practice.

This, in my opinion is how we must proceed.

Yours fraternally,

G. Healy.

## From G. Healy to Tim Wohlforth

Monday, July 9, 1973

Dear Tim,

Your letter of 7-5-73 provides a source of political encouragement to us here. We were obliged during your visit to stress the grave dangers arising from the method of attempting to straddle traditional American pragmatism with the struggle for dialectical materialism.

The important thing to understand is that there can be no real struggle for dialectical materialism unless you are orientated in your practice towards the working class. The ideological preparation takes place in the struggle within the party against the idealism, especially of the middle class. Without a constant struggle on this front you cannot prepare yourself to mount the struggle against idealism **within** the workers' movement. Unless this is done you cannot **penetrate** the workers' movement. It is not just a question of a decision, a turn or approach, to the working class — that is only the **form**. Revisionists never get beyond this form, that is why they are always talking about a working class which only **exists** in their heads. The **content** of our approach consists in our dialectical preparation of the practice through which we intervene inside the workers' movement.

The dialectical movement which is the cognition of objective reality proceeds from living perception to abstraction thence to practice. Living perception starts from the unity of opposites which is the party and the working class. In per-

ceiving what is happening within the working class you do so through the party — because you grasp the opposites from your membership of the party. You negate into your practice that body of abstract theory (essence) which you have already derived from your struggle within the party.

Living perception is posited on this abstract body of theory. From the conflict between these two opposites (i.e., abstract theory and living perception through practice) you derive the new essence which is an abstraction, the highest point of the development of theory. It is this which you take into your practice from which you go on deriving living perception.

We believe that the remarks of Comrade — emerge from the way in which the Workers League functions. The center of it is yourself. Since you are determined to break from it through struggle, then the future looks very bright politically.

Would you like me to write officially to your committee.

Warmest wishes,

G. Healy

## *From G. Healy to Tim Wohlforth*

Wednesday  
July 18th 1973

Dear Tim,

Since we have had no word from you about the camp in relation to the YS members we proposed sending from Britain, it now seems that we should call it off from this end. We have also had no reply from you to my last letter re the political implications of your problems, although we did receive your letter dated 7-9-73.

This letter seems very confused and we cannot see how lashing out in all directions within the Workers League is going to solve anything. You are responsible and there is little use looking for scapegoats.

Let us start from the present political situation. Watergate represents the high point of the political crisis within the US ruling class. It represents their reactions to the insoluble nature of the economic crisis. In essence it means that the most powerful group believe if anything that Nixon is too weak to deal with the coming working class upsurge in the USA.

This situation reflects the great movement that is coming within the working class, and that is the root of the crisis within the Workers League. The theoretical preparations of the International Committee to meet this crisis is contained in the 20-year-old break from Pabloism and our continuous struggle to fight it out against the way in which this brand of revisionism emerges within the working class movement.

Pabloism includes the old form gradualism so beloved by the reformists. It applies it just as much as it did in 1953 to the Stalinists of today. It is capitulatory not only to Stalinism but to all brands of bureaucracy. It reserves its hatred for the International Committee. The same can be said for all revisionist groups such as Spartacus. The way in which we fight all this is by a continuous study of the labor movement and the effect which bourgeois pressures emanating from it are relayed into our own ranks, especially through the middle class. Preparation to do battle against the ideological influence of the working class by the bourgeoisie is always begun by the way we politically solve the problems in our own ranks.

What we need within the Workers League now is a conscious unity of the opposites, and a united examination of all the effects of revisionism on our ranks. The opposites within the League is not you versus the rest but the SLL versus all of you. We are not holding Comrade ... or anyone else responsible. These are normal problems which we all face.

We urge the members of the leadership to avoid factionalism and subjectivism like the plague. We are now in the most vital phase of our preparation to penetrate the working class. Really great opportunities are ahead. It will be a most criminal act if these are missed.

Remember there is only the IC to carry out Trotsky's and Lenin's work. We have the objective situation to do it in.

Fraternally,

G. Healy

## From G. Healy to Tim Wohlforth

Monday  
July 23rd 1973

Dear Tim,

Your letter dated 20-7-73 received but again you do not acknowledge receipt of my letters to you. How can we carry on a correspondence in this way?

We are in sharp political disagreement with you on the handling of the internal situation. It is the old method of pragmatism which you brought over from the SWP which is at issue here.

You must hold Comrade ..., Comrade ..., etc. as a unity of opposites — otherwise you cannot train a cadre. That is why we have a cadre. *We hold on to them.*

They are not “bastards” but comrades who have to be trained if possible through constant struggle. You can only educate a youth cadre this way.

Regards,  
Jerry

# From G. Healy to Tim Wohlforth

Friday  
August 10th 1973

Dear Tim,

At the Secretariat meeting today, we discussed your forthcoming school in Canada. It was agreed that a meeting of the PC and the YS National Committee should be called to consider what in the opinion of the Secretariat is the political inadvisability of a delegation from the YS attending the school.

Briefly, there are two reasons for this recommendation.

*Firstly*, there are as you know important political differences between the SLL and the Workers League. These can eventually be resolved through the International Committee and the struggle of yourself and other comrades within the Workers League. We are prepared to help along these lines through the IC but experience has shown that our trips to the USA and Canada simply produce no tangible results. Early this year we attended your committee in Montreal only to find that the Workers League afterwards pursued policies contrary to our discussions. This is your right if you consider our advice wrong. But these are political acts which have definite political meaning. Formal acceptance of decisions only to ignore them in practice is the essence of separation of theory from practice.

*Secondly*, if you disagree with the advice of the SLL your proper course is to discuss it openly within the International Committee.

What we will not tolerate is the kind of relation we had with

the OCI, where they also used to accept the SLL only to knife every decision in the back as soon as they returned to France. Formal meetings became a cover behind which revisionism flourished.

A delegation from the YS could change nothing at Montreal. Any intervention by leading members would simply be a repetition of previous occasions. The Workers League leadership have to resolve their problems and you as their secretary know what has to be done. Get the work underway as an integral part of your turn to the US working class and the youth. Rest assured you will have all our support in this great task.

We propose sending Peter Jeffries to help with the lectures, but the rest is up to you.

Yours fraternally,

G. Healy

# *Wohlforth Letter of Resignation*

9-29-74

To The Political Committee,

After twenty one years in the socialist movement, and after ten years in the Workers League which I was instrumental in founding, it is necessary for me to resign at this time from the Workers League and from the International Committee of the Fourth International (the latter in a political sense since the Voorhis Act prohibits the membership of the Workers League in the Fourth International).

I am completely and utterly opposed to the proceedings and decisions of the Central Committee meeting, held on August 31st at our camp at the request of and in conjunction with the International Committee comrades. I believe this meeting represented a serious setback in the construction of the revolutionary party in the United States and in the construction of the revolutionary party on a worldwide basis.

(1) I oppose the decision made to remove me as National Secretary of the League. While the Central Committee has the constitutional right to take such an action it is a right rarely, if ever, evoked between National Conventions of the party. While the International Committee has the right to intervene within a national section and change its leadership, the history of the Communist and Trotskyist movement contains countless illustrations that this right should only be exercised under the most critical of situations.

The development of a leadership is the most difficult task in the construction of a revolutionary party and international.

Leaderships are historically developed through a long experience of struggle. It is therefore extremely dangerous to in any arbitrary fashion change a leadership upon the basis of the authority of the international. The whole experience in the Comintern under Zinoviev proves this to the hilt.

Of course circumstances can occur where a leadership developed in one period collapses completely before the tasks of the next period. Then, of course, a change in leadership becomes a burning necessity. However, such a change should take place in such a manner that the entire membership of the section, and even of the international, is educated in the process.

I was removed as National Secretary under conditions of a completely hysterical meeting, on the basis of charges of a completely slanderous nature, in the middle of the night at a camp so that there had been no, absolutely no, prior discussion of the questions in the Political Committee, the Central Committee and the whole party.

I do not need to defend my role in the movement over the past twenty one years. If I had not taken up the fight against Shachtman in 1955 there would have been no serious opposition to his turn into the Socialist Party. If I had not then fought day and night to construct a youth movement, despite the pressures coming from the SWP to abandon the project, there would have been no YSA, the first Trotskyist youth movement in the United States since 1940. If I had not taken up the fight for the positions of the International Committee against Hansen and Company no serious opposition would have emerged from the SWP. If I had not struggled for ten full years under the banner of the International Committee of the Fourth International there would not have been the movement today which removed me as National Secretary. These are my credentials in the movement. They are open for anyone to examine.

(2) I oppose the decision of the Central Committee, taken only because of the intervention of the International Commit-

tee comrades, to suspend Nancy Fields from membership on the basis of the unsubstantiated, ludicrous and absurd charge that she may be an agent of the CIA!

The procedure in this matter is monstrous. The reputation of a comrade is in any event irreparably damaged by making such a charge before perhaps a quarter of the membership of the Workers League even if later it is withdrawn (and there is no indication this is contemplated). The proper procedure would have been to investigate the matter privately in a serious fashion *before* dumping it into the Central Committee.

We face in this period great dangers from the CIA, the FBI, and other police bodies. We must take measures to protect our movement from such infiltration. But those measures must be very carefully and thoughtfully carried out so that the search for supposed agents is not more disruptive to the party than any agents could be. Agents are, of course, the most enthusiastic when it comes to such searches for they see them as ways to disrupt the party.

I would suggest the place to find agents in the Workers League is among those who spread scandal against the leaders of the League and not among those who are the victims of the slander. So it was in the days of the Fourth International under Trotsky.

It goes without saying that once charges of such a nature were introduced into the Central Committee meeting, it was not possible to hold a serious and objective discussion on anything. Clearly, the removal of myself from the position of National Secretary was a foregone conclusion once I would not join in the witchhunt of Comrade Fields.

(3) I object to allowing the introduction of slanders into the Central Committee meeting of the most monstrous sorts directed against me, including accusations of my personally benefiting financially from my position as National Secretary. I have been the brunt of slander from Shachtman, Hansen, Robertson, Marcus, Lambert, Lora, and many others. In fact I think it is safe to say there is no single person in the American radical

movement who has been attacked as violently as I have been over the years. But no one ever issued such charges against me. Whatever money I ever had in my life went into this movement. I leave the movement without even a jacket to get a job in.

Comrades who I have worked with for ten full years, who I have defended against every form of slander, who know me intimately, these comrades of the International Committee and of the Central Committee allowed these slanders to be made without themselves defending me against such charges.

Even though it was formally stated that such slanders would be set aside for investigation (which has not taken place), we all know that the slanders were at least in part accepted and affected the decision to remove me as National Secretary. I believe that virtually every member of the League today has heard them and partially accepts them.

(4) I reject out of hand the assessment made at the August 31st and the preceding August 30th Central Committee meetings of the past year of the Workers League. I believe the assessment made at the April International Committee Conference was a more objective and correct one for it saw the Workers League in its whole history, whole development.

During this past year we have fought, largely successfully, to begin to turn the Workers League into the working class through building a working class youth movement. We have launched the Twice Weekly *Bulletin*. We have expanded its circulation in working class communities across the nation and sustained it financially. We have held a series of regional conferences and then a highly successful national conference of the Young Socialists, building and maintaining a movement of working class youth. Such a movement never existed in the United States before in history. No other section of the IC outside the British section has such a movement. This is a tremendous historic achievement of the Workers League.

For the first time in our history we gave extremely serious and consistent consideration to perspectives. We drafted a per-

then, one by one, left the movement. We must understand that the most *general* cause of their leaving was their resistance to the changes in the party required to meet the new situation in the world capitalist crisis.

Not a single solitary one of those comrades was forced or hounded out of the League. Not a single one. Most of them left under conditions when there was no struggle whatsoever going on with them. If anything the main problem in the League over the past year continued to be, as in the past, an episodic rather than consistent struggle within the Political Committee and branches. Most of these people have adamantly refused to come back into the party despite the efforts of the IC.

At the same time, the Political Committee should have proposed to the IC in the summer a campaign to reach these elements as part of the preparation for the camp. No such proposal came from either the PC or the IC until the intervention of Comrade . . . It was not proposed at the special meeting in May either.

(6) I believe that the threads from which the entire fabric of accusations were woven which led to the August 31st decisions were provided by people hostile to the Workers League and what it has attempted to accomplish over the past year. They realize that I have been at the center of the fight for these changes. Some of them even have personal grudges against me. Therefore, for the entire year, they have been spreading gossip against me. Much of the attack has been against Comrade Fields because this was easier than a direct attack on me. Now it is revealed that these very same forces who fed poison to IC members have fed poison to Spartacists. Can we any longer doubt the real objectives of these individuals? Can we any longer be complicit in this campaign to destroy what has been built up over ten years?

(7) I am disturbed by developments within the League in the month since the camp. The subscription work has almost completely collapsed, the *Bulletin* sales have been allowed to fall, the fund drive is lagging way behind, the YS work has fallen

back and no national activities are taking place or are planned. Whenever I have raised these issues, I have been attacked as being a factionalist and panic monger. Therefore, my hands have been tied to do anything about it.

I believe that at the heart of the problems of the League now is a false approach to the Marxist method which has grown up out of the confusion introduced by the decisions of the International Committee. The comrades deny that the heart of dialectics lies in the *conflict* of opposites and that it is only through this *conflict* that the unity of opposites is achieved. Instead, the transition which takes place in the process of the transformation of opposites is seen as it is seen by the SWP as a merging of opposites, as a gradual and peaceful process. This, I believe, is the method of centrism.

Therefore, there is no longer any *fight* in the League — it is all seen in an idealist manner as explaining this and explaining that. For this reason there is no *drive* on mobilizations to base the mobilization on perspectives and to conflict with the resistance of party comrades to that perspective reflected in their work in the course of the drive. The drives have become demoralized affairs. The party as a whole is deeply demoralized from top to bottom. The only fight is a fight against me if I rock the boat by fighting to bring these problems up.

*There is more liquidationism in the Workers League over the past month than in the whole preceding year combined.*

(8) The immediate cause of my decision to resign from the Workers League is the recent communication from the International Committee. I disagree sharply with the proposal in that letter that I be barred from all work involved in the political direction of the day to day affairs of the League. Since I have led the League for ten years it seems essential that even if I am removed as National Secretary I work closely with the new National Secretary in the transition period. If this had happened for the past month, it may have helped to reverse some of the liquidationist trends.

I disagree with the decision to follow up the suspension of

Comrade Fields with barring her from any party work whatsoever even though in our tradition suspended members are allowed to and encouraged to carry out party work.

The only interpretation that can be placed on these two decisions together is that the proposed inquiry commission is to be an *inquisition* commission. Its task will be to try to dig up some sort of "evidence" to justify the decision incorrectly taken on August 31st. I will not be part of such an inquisition.

I hope that this parting of the ways with the Workers League and International Committee will only be temporary. We are now on the eve of tremendous developments in Europe and America where the building of the Fourth International is the indispensable weapon needed for socialist revolution. This is why the problems in the building of the Fourth International have become so enormous today.

Yours Fraternally,  
Tim Wohlforth

## **From Cliff Slaughter to Tim Wohlforth**

**Tim Wohlforth  
Copy to Political Committee  
of the Workers League**

**October 6, 1974**

**Dear Comrade,**

The International Committee has now received a copy of your letter of September 29 to the Political Committee of the Workers League, in which you say it is "necessary for you to resign from the Workers League and the International Committee." The reasons you give for this decision are totally unacceptable in our movement, and misrepresent completely the proceedings of the Central Committee of the Workers League on August 30 and 31, attended by members of the International Committee.

1) The International Committee did not set out to change the leadership of the Workers League. You were removed as Secretary by unanimous decision of your own Central Committee of the Workers League, on the motion of Comrade — . The reason for this decision was your own action at the IC Conference in April 1974. You permitted that Conference, with comrades present from countries where they work illegally, to complete its work in the presence of Nancy Fields, one of your delegation, whom you knew to have had very close family connections with the CIA. Neither you nor she brought this question before the committee so that it could be investigated and cleared. The only responsible action for the IC, when this

came to light in August this year, was to bring it urgently to the notice of the Workers League and to begin taking the necessary security measures. The Workers League was compelled to act immediately since security questions were involved for the League itself.

This is what happened, and not, as you assert, an "arbitrary" intervention by the International Committee to change a leadership "on the basis of the authority of the International." It is utterly false to say, as you do, that you were removed from the secretaryship in an "hysterical" meeting. The information on security was presented to a full meeting of the Central Committee, and the motions on you and NF were carried by unanimous vote, including your own and that of NF. Both you and she spoke freely in the discussion then and on every occasion before and afterwards.

2) In opposing the suspension of NF you place first the assertion that this decision was taken "only because of the intervention of the IC," and that the IC brought into the Central Committee the "unsubstantiated, ludicrous and absurd charge that she may be an agent of the CIA!" The IC intervened because it was urgently necessary to establish (a) what the connections of NF were and are with the CIA, and (b) why her past connections were concealed by you and by her. In such a situation the IC must and will always intervene immediately, and it will not be put off by narrow nationalist accusations of "influencing" decisions in the sections.

You say "proper procedure would have been to investigate the matter privately" and that our procedure is "monstrous." On the contrary, the CC of the Workers League is the highest body of the League between Congresses, and the IC itself has the responsibility of international leadership between international conferences. There can be no question of "private" investigations but only of committees set up to carry out investigations, on strict terms of reference, set up by decision of these highest elected bodies and responsible to them. Our movement has never, does not now and will never, substitute for this any "private" procedure.

You assert that the measures against police infiltration must be "carefully and thoughtfully" carried out. The IC has established an inquiry to take evidence from every possible source and then report to the IC. This is the most rigorous and strictly controlled procedure that is possible.

It is a lie that you were required to join a "witch hunt." No such "witch hunt" took place, as you well know. NF was confronted with the information referred to. You yourself were asked directly why you concealed the information. You replied that you had overlooked it. The decisions to suspend NF and remove you from the secretaryship were taken in order that the necessary inquiry can proceed immediately. Until its work is completed it is impossible for a responsible leadership to change these decisions.

3) The IC, and the CC of the Workers League, did not raise against you any allegations about financial matters. Nor do the members of the IC present at the meeting accept these allegations. The situation created by your own admitted serious mistakes of leadership, did however, produce a number of such allegations. The IC cannot prevent such things from arising. The only way is to immediately investigate the matter and clear it up. You conceal the fact in your letter, that apparently the immediate source of these matters is someone until recently very close to NF, and that one possibility requiring investigation by the commission is her own personal responsibility for their arising.

On these questions, what more responsible decision could the IC or the Workers League Central Committee take than to have these matters investigated and cleared? This decision you yourself voted for, indeed you proposed it in the course of discussion.

4) Finally, you say the "immediate cause" of your resignation is the IC's letter of September 15. You reject the proposals of the IC, which met on that day to discuss the report of those comrades who attended the Workers League Summer School and the CC. The IC took an extremely serious view of the security implications of the report. Among the decisions taken

as a result was the appointment of the investigating commission, instructed to begin and complete its work before the next IC meeting. In view of the information revealed, and not contested by you, that you endangered the security of the IC Conference, it was recommended that until the work of the inquiry is complete you must hand over entire responsibility for leadership. It is on this vital and urgent question of security that the movement is acting, and not on a general question, as you suppose, of transition from one leadership to another.

As for NF, again the nature of her suspension and exclusion from party work is not decided by the "tradition" of encouraging work by suspended members. She is suspended while security investigations proceed, and until this is cleared she cannot participate. You choose to ignore the security questions, which can be cleared only by the most detailed and responsible investigation, and condemn the inquiry as an "inquisition" set up to "dig up" evidence to justify the August 31 decisions. This you must withdraw.

As you know, the decisions of August 31 were taken on the basis of evidence already before the committee, and admitted by you, namely that you concealed from the IC your knowledge of NF's past CIA connections, and so did she. No one was "condemned" as in an inquisition. The decision was to set up the inquiry and meanwhile to remove you as secretary, but retaining you as full-time party worker in New York with special leading responsibility for the *Bulletin*. NF was suspended for the investigation. These decisions you and she voted for.

This letter has so far been confined to the actual decisions of the IC and the Workers League CC, and the false accusations you make against these. We have explained that these decisions were taken completely in accordance with the principles of our movement and the responsibilities of its leading committees.

But we must finally draw your attention, as a comrade who has been in the forefront of the struggles of the IC, to the political and theoretical implications of your letter. In particular, on page two of your letter you refer to the CC's

decision on NF: *"taken only because of the intervention of the IC."*

As a comrade who has had to fight against the anti-internationalism of Cannon and Hansen, then Robertson, you must surely pull up sharp when you re-read these words. With this phrase you lower yourself to the level of that narrow national American pragmatism, which sees the International only as an appendage to your own immediate purposes. With such an appeal, you deny your own past struggles and appeal to the worst elements around the movement, and particularly to the hostile groups waiting to attack and destroy it. Every rotten petty-bourgeois revisionist concentrates his attack on the alleged authoritarianism of the IC and defends his national independence.

In the past, you know that we have clashed constantly on the question of your tendency to **adapt** to the decisions of the IC and the SLL-WRP. We pointed out many times that this was wrong and dangerous, above all because it opposes the method of dialectical materialism in the relation between theory and practice and substitutes for it a subjective, individual adaptation to the International, which is then seen not as the world party of the socialist revolution of which the United States is part, but instead an external source of contemplation and inspiration.

From this position, two developments were possible. Either overcome it in a struggle for dialectical materialism and the party or fail to do so and relapse into pure subjectivism. You are now in danger of doing the latter. The same subjective arbitrariness which selected what it liked from the IC (in order to carry on as it pleased, in the manner of Cannon) now just as arbitrarily decides that the IC decision must be rejected! You then find yourself, throughout the letter, asserting yourself as an individual leader against the movement. **Your** conviction that NF is not a security risk must predominate over the security requirements and decisions of our leading bodies. **Your** assessment of your record as leader is placed before everything else. You find yourself unable to conceive of the Workers League as a party and as a vital part of the Fourth In-

ternational. Instead you see it only as a retinue of your followers, who will collapse without you.

All this individualism leads you to misrepresent the decisions of the committees and to demand that we treat these questions only as a matter between ourselves as friends who know each other's record. Your own letter should now show to you very clearly the dangers of this subjectivism. Your insistence on the "conflict of opposites" against the transition, the movement of matter, is at the root of these questions. A stress on the dialectical struggle of opposites which does not free itself from **idealism**, i.e. is not materialist, does not see the primacy of the movement of matter, can at best end up, as Hegel did, with a closed **system** instead of a revolutionary **method**. But in this case it is much worse. Hegel was an "objective idealist." From this position it was possible for Marx and Engels to negate it and go forward to the Marxist world outlook. Pragmatism on the contrary, is **subjective** idealism. Its criteria are subjective and individual. The conception of dialectics you advocate is adapted to the approach of individuals who select the "opposites" quite arbitrarily for their own purposes, set them up, denounce their opponents as "opposites," and proceed to arrive at the "unity of opposites" to their own satisfaction.

How can we interpret otherwise your own letter, in which the movement of matter i.e., the working class, with the party as its leadership, in struggle for power in the world crisis, can find no place, no relationship with any of the "conflict of opposites" on which you spend some 2,000 words.

You have in fact completely reversed the objective relations in our movement. According to your letter:

**"At the heart of the problems in the League now is a false approach to the Marxist method which has grown up out of the confusion introduced by the decisions of the IC."**

Is not this an even more explicit attack on the IC and the Marxist method than anything that came from Cannon and Robertson? The opposition to Marxist method, to dialectical materialism in the US **is the result of the intervention of the IC?** You, however, Tim Wohlforth, **have** got a correct Marxist method? Will you defend this position, which asserts an Ameri-

can Marxism in struggle against the distortion of dialectical materialism by the IC ? If you do, you openly reject **everything** in the struggle of the International Committee against Pabloism, against the SWP, against the OCI, in struggle to build our own sections.

On p. 3 you refer to the trade union work, saying it "has not been given the proper emphasis." Furthermore, you say, "there are grave weaknesses in the development of youth cadres."

This formula masks over the fact that the perspectives of the IC and of the Workers League were not carried out: that the trade union work was virtually liquidated (and it was not at all merely a question of "the proper emphasis"); the "outward turn" to the youth has liquidated the youth cadres, and thus transformed the youth work into the opposite of revolutionary practice. You call this just "grave weaknesses." Moreover, you explain that these are "problems which inevitably arise in the course of taking the party outward." On the contrary, the "turn outward" becomes liquidation of the party into "community politics" and the abandonment of the political perspectives, once the central question of leadership and the training of the cadre is pushed into the background.

At this late hour, Comrade Wohlforth, we call upon you to reconsider and immediately change your position. It is not too late. You are called upon to resume immediately the leading responsibilities to the Workers League and the IC and collaborate in the work of the inquiry. This inquiry has had to wait a few days until the work can be completed, but arrangements are in hand to begin the actual investigation within the next few days. The comrades are instructed to complete their work and report to the IC within a very short time. The committee asks you Comrade Wohlforth, to immediately withdraw your letter of resignation and collaborate fully in the work of the investigation. Only in this way can you prepare to resume your positions in the leadership.

Yours fraternally,

CS

For the IC

## ***From Fred Mazelis to Tim Wohlforth***

October 30, 1974

Dear Comrade Tim,

The inquiry has started its proceedings.

In your letter to the Workers League Political Committee of 9-29-74 you state:

“We face in this period great dangers from the CIA, the FBI, and other police bodies. We must take measures to protect our movement from such infiltration. But those measures must be very carefully and thoughtfully carried out so that the search for supposed agents is not more disruptive to the party than any agents could be. Agents are, of course, the most enthusiastic when it comes to such searches for they see them as ways to disrupt the party.

“I would suggest the place to find agents in the Workers League is among those who spread scandal against the leaders of the League and not among those who are the victims of slanders. So it was in the days of the Fourth International under Trotsky.”

I want to ask you, especially in view of this statement, to come before the inquiry and present any information you have on these matters. If as you say our movement, the movement to which you devoted so many years, is endangered, then you bear a political responsibility to help bring this out.

Comradely,

Fred Mazelis

(For the Political Committee)

## ***From Cliff Slaughter to Tim Wohlforth***

January 22, 1975

Dear Comrade Wohlforth,

We have received a copy of your document, "The Workers League and the International Committee," dated January 11. This letter is to propose once more, as the IC has consistently advocated, that you come into the ranks of the Workers League and the international movement in order that there can be the most thorough discussion of the political position you hold. The place to discuss the questions you have raised is inside your own party. You write on p.37 of your statement: "I have therefore been left with no alternative than to remain silent as the Workers League turns to centrism and the principles of internationalism are being trampled upon or — to place my assessment of this situation before the working class public. I have chosen the latter course. Any other course would be unprincipled." On the contrary, to proceed in this way is to place yourself above the party and the working class. You are called upon to abandon this course of providing aid to all the enemies of the International Committee and the Workers League, and to bring your document into the party, accepting that the discussion of it must take place within the framework of your acceptance of the discipline of the League and the political authority of the IC.

Yours fraternally,

C. Slaughter

(for International Committee)

Copy to the Workers League

# *Statements*



# *Findings of the Commission of Inquiry*

November 9, 1974

The Workers League Central Committee on August 31, 1974, unanimously recommended the setting up by the IC of a commission of inquiry into the security matters raised by the IC in relation to the April 1974 International Conference. (The Workers League works in political sympathy with but is not affiliated to the International Committee because of the Voorhis Act.) These matters involved the failure of Comrade TW to declare the existence of Comrade NF's previous family connections with the CIA, although he later admitted he had been aware of these connections.

The IC meeting of September 15 instructed the commission of inquiry to begin and complete its work in the shortest possible time, taking statements from present members of the Workers League and others who had been members during the past two years. Comrades TW and NF at the August 31 meeting of the Workers League CC, together with all the other members of the CC, voted for the removal of TW as national secretary, the suspension of NF and the setting up of the inquiry. However, when invited to collaborate with the inquiry, they refused to do so, placing their personal considerations above the decisions of the party, a position which is impermissible.

We found that TW did withhold information vital to the security of the IC and its 1974 conference. When asked directly, in the presence of three witnesses, on August 18, 1974, in

London about the possibility of any CIA connections of NF, he deliberately withheld the facts, thus placing his own individual judgment before the requirements of the movement. He later stated he did know of these connections, but did not consider it important to say so.

The inquiry established that from the age of 12 until the completion of her university education, NF was brought up, educated and financially supported by her aunt and uncle, Albert and Gigs Morris. Albert Morris is the head of the CIA's IBM computer operation in Washington as well as being a large stockholder in IBM. He was a member of the OSS, forerunner of the CIA, and worked in Poland as an agent of imperialism. During the 1960s a frequent house guest at their home in Maine was Richard Helms, ex-director of the CIA and now US Ambassador in Iran.

The commission of inquiry met in New York from October 24 until November 2 taking statements from a total of 22 members and ex-members. As well as establishing the facts on the immediate security questions, the inquiry examined the political developments in the Workers League which gave rise to this situation. We were concerned with the political role of TW in the leadership of the Workers League and not in any way with his personal idiosyncracies. The basic political reason for the crisis in the Workers League which led to the intervention of the IC was TW's failure to break from pragmatism. The IC had continually attempted to correct his political and theoretical mistakes, but TW simply adapted pragmatically to the criticisms. He proceeded by example and imitation, instead of taking the essence of the IC's struggle for Marxism into the party and the workers' movement. Because of this, no leadership could be trained; only an organization and administration centered on TW as an individual. This obstructed and eventually collided with the political foundations of the Workers League, which is its relationship with the IC.

The rapid development of the economic crisis and of the class struggle after August 1973 brought to a head this con-

tradition within the Workers League. TW turned to the relationship with NF as a pragmatic and individualist solution to the political difficulties. This led very rapidly to a large section of the leadership in New York leaving the movement. There was no political struggle to learn from this or to bring these comrades back into the party.

The experience leading up to the dangerous security situation of April to September 1974 shows the reactionary role of pragmatism and the petty bourgeois intelligentsia in the United States, reflected in the 1939 to 1940 Burnham-Shachtman opposition, the Shachtmanite movement in the 1940s and 50s and the revisionist developments in the SWP from 1954 to 1963.

We find that TW and NF's refusal to cooperate in the work of the inquiry shows that they have not learned these fundamental lessons. Unless they correct this position immediately, they must find themselves outside the revolutionary movement and subject to the pressures of the most reactionary forces.

We found that the record of NF in the party was that of a highly unstable person who never broke from the opportunist method of middle-class radicalism. She adopted administrative and completely subjective methods of dealing with political problems. These methods were extremely destructive, especially in the most decisive field of the building of leadership. TW was fully aware of this instability, and bears the responsibility for bringing NF into leadership. He found himself left in an isolated position in which he eventually concealed NF's previous CIA connections from the IC. He bears clear political responsibility for this.

The inquiry found as follows:

After interviewing and investigating all the available material, there is no evidence to suggest that NF or TW is in any way connected with the work of the CIA or any other government agency. The inquiry took into account TW's many years of struggle for the party and the IC, often under very dif-

ficult conditions, and urged him to correct his individualist and pragmatist mistakes and return to the party.

We recommend that TW, once he withdraws his resignation from the Workers League, returns to the leading committees and to his work on the *Bulletin*, and has the right to be nominated to any position, including that of National Secretary, at the forthcoming National Conference early in 1975.

We recommend the immediate lifting of the suspension of NF, with the condition that she is not permitted to hold any office in the Workers League for two years.

The inquiry urgently draws the attention of all sections to the necessity of constant vigilance on matters of security. Our movement has great opportunities for growth in every country because of the unprecedented class struggles which must erupt from the world capitalist crisis. This situation also means that the counterrevolutionary activities of the CIA and all imperialist agencies against us will be intensified. It is a basic revolutionary duty to pay constant and detailed attention to these security matters as part of the turn to the masses for the building of revolutionary parties.

November 9, 1974

# **An Answer to the Slanders of Robertson and Wohlforth**

**Workers League  
Political Committee Statement**

**February 21, 1975**

The Political Committee of the Workers League denounces the slanders and lies made against our organization in the Robertsonite press, *Workers Vanguard*, January 31, 1975.

The printed allegations leave the Workers League open to attacks from the police and the courts. The record must be cleared at once.

The Workers League is not a member of the International Committee. Because of the anti-working class Voorhis Act, the Workers League is a fraternal section in political sympathy with the International Committee.

This is known to the Robertsonites. It is also known that G. Healy, general secretary of the Workers Revolutionary Party of Britain, is politically barred from entry into the United States. But for their own reactionary reasons, they have produced a two-page article ("Wohlforth Terminated") which sets out to frame leading IC members. The article names Healy and another member of the WRP Central Committee as having visited North America on IC business. This is a lie consciously designed to create the conditions for legal harassment of the IC by the police and immigration authorities.

The article belongs to Robertson. But the words were supplied by Tim Wohlforth, who deserted the Workers League on September 29, 1974. It is a political marriage that is pregnant with historical ironies. But it is entirely right that they should rediscover each other in the campaign to smear the IC at this time when every revisionist's hand is raised against the building of the world party of the socialist revolution by the IC. The profusion of "bulletins" and scandal sheets has never been so frenzied.

Wohlforth was not "terminated," nor was he "purged." He resigned. He deserted the movement of which he was a founding member.

The circumstances of Wohlforth's resignation as presented by Robertson (and Wohlforth) are a pack of lies. It is reduced to the question of whether or not Nancy Fields, an ex-leading member of the Workers League and a close associate of Wohlforth's, was a CIA agent. That was not the issue.

It was the culmination of a long political struggle between Wohlforth's idealist and pragmatic method and the fight for a Marxist method. Wohlforth placed his own personal considerations before those of the Workers League.

He failed to obtain a security clearance for Nancy Fields, although he knew she had CIA family connections. He admitted knowing about these connections, but said he didn't think they were important!

The Central Committee of the Workers League voted unanimously on August 31, 1974, to replace Wohlforth as national secretary by Comrade Fred Mazelis and to suspend Fields pending an inquiry. Both Wohlforth and Fields voted for these decisions.

The inquiry fully substantiated that these CIA connections did exist. "From the age of 12 until the completion of her university education, Fields was brought up, educated, and financially supported by her aunt and uncle, Albert and Gigs Morris. Albert Morris is head of the CIA's IBM computer operation in Washington, as well as being a large stockholder.

He was a member of the OSS, forerunner of the CIA, and worked in Poland as an agent of imperialism. During the 1960s, a frequent house guest at their home in Maine was Richard Helms, ex-director of the CIA and now US Ambassador in Iran." (Commission of Inquiry Report, November 9, 1974.) The report was unanimously accepted by the IC and the Workers League.

We believe that Wohlforth had a political responsibility to bring these connections to the notice of the leadership of the Workers League and his fraternal colleagues in the IC so that she should receive a security clearance, especially since she was delegated by the Workers League to undertake important political work.

In the revisionist circles, our deep concern on these matters is put down to "paranoia" about the CIA. Here is the petty bourgeois liberal face of all revisionist groups. This is just one of the profound differences between us and them.

The revisionist camp is enmeshed in petty bourgeois radicalism, always trying to play down the dangers of State provocation and repression. The IC is continuously struggling to develop and train a leadership in the working class in the Bolshevik traditions of uncompromising hostility to the enemy camp.

Both Wohlforth and Fields refused to cooperate with the commission of inquiry which they had voted to set up. Indeed, Wohlforth's resignation came only a matter of days after he knew the inquiry was going to commence its work. As an ex-member, he was offered the opportunity to submit written or verbal evidence. He refused. So did Fields.

Having established that Fields was not connected with the CIA other than through family relations, the suspension on her was lifted immediately with the proviso that she not be permitted to hold any office in the Workers League for a period of two years. This was not an "arbitrary" decision, as Robertson claims. It was because of her politically unstable past and the fact that she had never broken from the opportunist methods

of middle class radicalism which had led to outright destruction of the party's ranks.

The inquiry recommended that Wohlforth should withdraw his resignation and return to his place in the Workers League. Nothing was heard of Wohlforth until December 1974, when he suddenly sought readmittance to the Workers League. When he refused to accept the political authority and discipline of the Workers League, he was refused admission.

In January this year, he produced an utterly revisionist "bulletin" in an attempt to throw up dust to cover up his right-wing retreat from the Workers League and from the emergent struggles in the working class.

Excerpts from this document have found their way into the Robertsonite press. In naming IC members, dates of visits, etc., these reactionary forces aid the capitalist class in attempting to disrupt the international work of our movement. Political differences are not discussed. In their frenzied hatred of the IC and through their own predilection for slanderous gossip, they reproduce lies which could be used by the ruling class under the Voorhis Act to attack our movement.

In its findings, the commission of inquiry noted that unless he corrected his political position, Wohlforth would find himself "outside the revolutionary movement and subject to the pressure of the most reactionary forces." In reaching what amounts to political accord with Robertson on the basis of this witchhunt against the IC., this warning has been fulfilled.

Wohlforth loads the gun and Robertson fires it. This hysterical and lying attack on the IC comes at a time when our international movement is marching from strength to strength based on the most determined fight for Marxism in giving independent revolutionary expression to the struggles of the working class as it faces the tasks of smashing capitalism and taking power.

February 21, 1975

# ***Behind Wohlforth's Resignation***

## **Statement of the International Committee of the Fourth International**

**March 22, 1975**

Tim Wohlforth, who resigned from the Workers League of the United States on September 29, 1974, has joined hands with the most virulent opponents of Trotskyism and the International Committee of the Fourth International.

He resigned from the Workers League, the fraternal section of the International Committee in the US, one month after he was removed as national secretary of the Workers League.

The decision to replace him as national secretary was taken on August 31, 1974, by the unanimous decision of the League's Central Committee, *including Wohlforth's own vote.*

The vote for his own removal as national secretary expressed Wohlforth's complete agreement with all the other members of the League's Central Committee that an urgent and drastic change was necessary in the leadership of the Workers League.

The unanimous decision to replace Wohlforth turned on fundamental principles of the theory and practice of building revolutionary leadership in the working class.

The situation came to a head at the end of August 1974, when information was given to the Workers League Central Committee that Wohlforth's lieutenant in the League, a certain Nancy Fields, had previous family connections with the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

The revelations about Fields' previous family connection with the CIA came as a complete surprise to the League's Central Committee and also to the International Committee delegates.

There was some alarm as well. During an important international meeting in London in May 1974, the Workers League delegation had included Wohlforth and Fields. Neither at the meeting or before it did Wohlforth ask for a security clearance for Fields. To obtain such a clearance is a rudimentary principle of the Marxist movement.

To have got a clearance for Fields was of crucial importance, since she was a completely unknown political quantity to the IC. In such cases, the IC relies on the revolutionary responsibility of the leaders of its member sections to raise the security considerations of the IC.

Wohlforth didn't. He kept absolutely silent about the fact that she had family connections with the CIA. He concealed this information from the IC because of his personal relations with her. He put these personal relations above the political interests of his own section and the security considerations of the IC.

At a meeting in London on August 18, 1974, Wohlforth was specifically asked whether Fields had any CIA connections and he replied, "No."

When the facts were related to the Workers League Central Committee 13 days later, Wohlforth changed his position. Now, he admitted knowing of her family connections with the CIA. But he said he did not mention them because he did not consider them important.

The League's Central Committee thought otherwise. And so, on reflection, did Wohlforth. The committee voted unanimously to implement three decisions:

To remove Wohlforth as national secretary and replace him with Comrade Fred Mazelis.

To set up a commission of inquiry to investigate the security questions involved.

To suspend from membership Nancy Fields, pending the outcome of the inquiry.

On September 29, 1974, one month after voting for these decisions, Wohlforth resigned from the Workers League. In his resignation letter, he completely repudiated the decisions he had voted for. He wrote:

*"I am completely and utterly opposed to the proceedings and decisions of the Central Committee meeting held on August 31 at our camp at the request of and in conjunction with the International Committee comrades.*

*"I believe this meeting represented a serious setback in the construction of the revolutionary party in the United States and in the construction of the Fourth International on a worldwide basis."*

If it was a "serious setback," no one has noticed. His desertion did not inspire a mass walkout by other members of the Workers League. When he left, he took only one person with him — Nancy Fields — to whom he is perfectly entitled as a political accomplice.

In the months prior to their departure, the Wohlforth-Fields leadership had taken an extremely destructive turn, resulting in nearly 100 members leaving the League's branches in New York and elsewhere, involving the decimation of forces in some interstate areas.

Work in the trade unions was nonexistent, youth work was reduced to community social work, and philanthropic barbecues and "trailblazing" (paper sales drives) became a frenzied substitute for recruiting and training a revolutionary cadre in the working class.

This situation has now been changed. The removal of Wohlforth and Fields had considerably strengthened the Workers League, a fact which is fully recognized throughout the International Committee.

Nor, despite Wohlforth's claim, has the "serious setback" been noted internationally. In all sections of the International Committee the lessons of the Wohlforth experience are being taken into the theory and practice of building revolutionary

parties in the working class.

Only an individual of astonishing conceit could claim to be bigger than the IC or any of its member sections. Wohlforth is such a person.

He brought Fields to an important international meeting in May 1974 under conditions which completely overrode the security considerations of the IC. This demonstrated the most feckless middle class attitude to the security of the IC, his own section and its whole membership.

Yet in his resignation letter (September 29, 1974) Wohlforth wrote:

*"I oppose the decision of the Central Committee, taken only because of the intervention of the International Committee comrades, to suspend Nancy Fields from membership on the basis of the unsubstantiated, ludicrous and absurd charge that she may be an agent of the CIA."*

It is a complete lie that the decision was taken "only because of" the IC's intervention. It was taken by the Workers League Central Committee — unanimously, with the support of both Wohlforth and Fields.

Secondly, there was no "unsubstantiated, ludicrous and absurd charge" made against Fields. The question was asked — why hadn't Wohlforth informed the IC and the leadership of his own organization that Fields had family connections with the CIA ?

Her connections were certainly "substantiated" by the inquiry commission. In its report, dated November 9, 1974, the two-man inquiry stated:

*"The inquiry established that from the age of 12 until the completion of her university education, Nancy Fields was brought up, educated and financially supported by her aunt and uncle, Albert and Gigs Morris. Albert Morris is head of the CIA's IBM computer operation in Washington as well as being a large stockholder in IBM. He was a member of the OSS, forerunner of the CIA, and worked in Poland as an agent of imperialism. During the 1960s a frequent house guest at their home in Maine was Richard Helms, ex-director of the CIA and now US ambassador in Iran."*

It can now be added that the CIA's computer section was not only collecting worldwide data on the left for its counter-revolutionary conspiracies, coups and assassinations, but it was also building up a computerized bank on American citizens.

These revelations were published in *The New York Times* on December 22, 1974, by reporter Seymour Hersh who said that nail tampering, electronic surveillance and the use of informants against US dissidents had been conducted for at least 10 years — "all completely illegal."

In a follow-up article on January 19, 1975, Hersh wrote that "former high-level members" of the CIA told him that "There were a number of CIA-directed wiretaps and break-ins in the United States in the last 10 years aimed at radicals and other dissident groups. Some of these activities, they said, were conducted by outside 'contract' operatives who were paid in cash and provided with no records or papers to indicate that they were working on behalf of the CIA."

Was it "ludicrous" and "absurd" for the Workers League Central Committee, whose members had been deliberately kept in the dark about Fields' previous family history, to ask for her suspension until the commission of inquiry had investigated the matter?

Wohlforth now thinks so. In fact, he is enraged by it. "The procedure in this matter is monstrous," he says in his resignation letter.

If he, Wohlforth, is satisfied that Fields is not a security risk, then that should satisfy the whole of the Workers League and the IC. And if anyone questions his divine right to arbitrate on such matters, he, Wohlforth, will resign and go howling into the revisionist press. And this is what the pair of them did.

The timing of their joint walkout was curious. It followed only days on the heels of a letter sent to Wohlforth by the IC which stated that the inquiry commission was on its way to conduct its work with a view of clearing the air as quickly as possible. Wohlforth's reply came in the form of his resignation letter. Fields never bothered to write at all.

When the commission began its work in New York on October 24, 1974, Wohlforth refused to collaborate with it,

although he voted to set it up. As an ex-member he was invited to submit verbal or written evidence, but he declined to do so. So did Fields.

Between October 24 and November 2, 1974, the commission took statements from a total of 22 members and ex-members of the Workers League. Apart from establishing her hitherto hushed-up family connections with the CIA, the inquiry uncovered her history of political activity, all of which had little in common with the struggle for Marxism.

She was associated with the SDS during the Columbia sit-in in New York in 1968 and later flirted with the Maoist-influenced Peace and Freedom Party in Boston. One witness said that Fields had once claimed that she knew "all the big guys in the Panthers."

It was clear from the witnesses' statements that although Fields talked recklessly about her alleged activities in left-wing circles, she was less forthcoming about her uncle, Albert Morris, her "foster father."

In one of his bulletins, Wohlforth remarks:

*"They (members of the IC) had 'discovered' what had been common knowledge in the movement for years — Comrade Fields' uncle had worked for the CIA until 1961."*

This is a brazen lie. The inquiry established quite the contrary position — the membership of the Workers League did not know, members of the Central Committee and Political Committee did not know, and nor did anyone on the International Committee.

While censuring Wohlforth for failing to get a security clearance for Fields, the commission of inquiry stated:

*"After interviewing and investigating all the available materials, there is no evidence to suggest that Nancy Fields or Tim Wohlforth is in any way connected with the work of the CIA or any other government agency.*

*"We recommend that Tim Wohlforth, once he withdraws his resignation from the Workers League, returns to the leading committees and to his work on the 'Bulletin' and has the right to be nominated in any position, including that of national secretary, at*

*the forthcoming National Conference early in 1975.*

*"We recommend the immediate lifting of the suspension of Nancy Fields, with the condition that she is not permitted to hold any office in the Workers League for two years."*

The commission of inquiry conducted its work meticulously and in the most responsible way. There was absolutely no panic associated with it. It was a principled task that had to be carried out and perhaps will have to be carried out again in the future.

Without this sense of responsibility there can be no training of a revolutionary leadership in the working class to take the power.

All leaders in our movement bear tremendous responsibilities in this respect. Wohlforth could not have been an exception. To have allowed him to be, would have been to weaken and miseducate the revolutionary cadre.

The findings of the commission of inquiry were relayed to him early in November. He rejected them out of hand.

An individual with such contempt for party organization and discipline cannot be a leader in the International Committee. That is why he was replaced by the Workers League Central Committee on a unanimous vote, Wohlforth's included.

The CIA is not an incidental question for our movement, but a question of indispensable tasks flowing from the principles of the construction of revolutionary parties of the International Committee of the Fourth International. Only someone who fails to take at all seriously the building of the world party of socialist revolution can dismiss the question of security against the CIA, the international center of the counterrevolutionary plans of the imperialists.

Wohlforth is just such a person. He is now howling in protest against having been removed by the Central Committee of the Workers League from the position of secretary. But it is surely absolutely ludicrous to suppose that, having refused to accept responsibility for a basic question of security clearance against CIA connections, he could continue in a position of national leadership.

The IC and the Workers League have never and will never under any circumstances knowingly permit within their ranks anyone with CIA connections, just as we expose the CIA ruthlessly outside our movement.

We insist on immediate and rigorous inquiry into any such connection. It is the future of the revolution that is at stake. It should come as no surprise that Wohlforth is defended and embraced on these questions by the bitterest opponents of Trotskyism, the Socialist Workers Party, and Robertson, who reject the perspectives of world revolution.

It has now been publicly revealed that the FBI infiltrated the SWP over a period of years. Despite this, and despite the fact that the CIA is responsible for the physical destruction of thousands of workers and youth considered enemies of US imperialism, and will plan a similar fate for the sections of the International Committee, Wohlforth and these revisionists come together in unity against the elementary and principled measures taken by the Workers League.

The anti-internationalism of the politics of Wohlforth, and of those who support him, the SWP and Robertson, is all of a piece with Wohlforth's placing of personal judgments and considerations higher than the fundamental and elementary requirements of the revolutionary movement.

In the commission of inquiry report, Wohlforth was warned that unless he corrected his position immediately, he must find himself outside the revolutionary movement and subject to the pressure of the most reactionary forces.

This is precisely what has happened. He is a temporary celebrity in revisionist circles because he is churning out slanders and lies about the IC, the Workers Revolutionary Party, and the Workers League.

Let him. It does not intimidate the International Committee or any of its sections. On the contrary, Wohlforth's line up with the revisionists is most important for the political education of the whole IC. Having abandoned completely the fight for Marxism and his responsibilities as a leader in the revolutionary movement, Wohlforth has found the friends he deserves.

March 22, 1975

***Wohlforth  
Joins the SWP***



## *Letter to Barry Sheppard from Tim Wohlforth*

January 1975

Dear Comrade Sheppard,

I assure you the document "The Workers League and the International Committee" is genuine. The experiences outlined in it are accurate down to the smallest detail. The political positions in it are clearly mine, positions I have held publically and privately for a long time.

The document was sent to you because, as the document itself explains, I have not been allowed to present these views within the Workers League and International Committee, and I feel they need to be confronted within the workers movement as a whole at this time.

I will be happy to (sic) send you 10 additional copies. These will be available to you by the weekend as they are produced by xerox. The cost will be \$25 or \$2.50 per copy which is my cost.

Comradely,  
Tim Wohlforth

## *Letter to Jack Barnes from Tim Wohlforth*

June 24, 1975

Dear Jack:

We have had some time to think about the discussion we held with you and the other comrades, as well as to study the Black resolution and the international discussion material which you made available to us.

As you know, since at least the beginning of this year, we have been convinced of two central political points which we expressed in letters to Comrades Sheppard and Hansen. The first is that the idealist and ultra-left course of the WRP and its satallites (sic) like the WL represents a fundamental break with Trotskyism. This tendency today represents an impediment to the construction of the Fourth International at this critical time. While individuals and perhaps even tendencies from the so-called IC may contribute to the FI in the future, they will do so only through a fundamental break with the policies of G. Healy and this history.

We believe this turn on the part of the IC, while prepared through sectarian practices in the past is primarily its reaction to the new international situation. The chief characteristic of this new situation is the powerful movement of the working class in every country under conditions of the developing economic crisis. The IC is running away precisely from the

responsibility posed to it by this crisis: a crisis which it had predicted for so long.

The second essential point is in regard to the SWP. We became convinced that its rich history under the leadership of James P. Cannon marked the most important contribution to the construction of the Fourth International outside that of Trotsky himself. This is why this history has been subjected to such a slander campaign from Pablo, from the dissident (sic) groups (in our opinion right-wing splits) breaking from the SWP such as Passen-Gregorich and Fender and from the IC itself. This is why we felt it was important to write an answer to Mike Banda. We still maintain that such material is highly important for the development of the entire FI.

Most important is the response of the SWP to this new stage of the crisis. In our opinion, the party has turned to the working class seeking to seriously confront the problems of developing a bridge to the current consciousness of workers who are in motion. Only in this way can Trotsky's Transitional Program live in our day and a mass revolutionary party be built in America in preparation for the socialist revolution.

This became absolutely clear to us in practice in the two Boston anti-racism marches, as well as in the SWP's intervention in the municipal crisis. Upon reading the SWP resolution on American Perspectives, we found ourselves in basic agreement with it.

In the course of the discussion we held, we hoped to make essentially two points: 1. the importance of propaganda work for the labor party in this period in preparation for a future labor party development; 2. the importance of work among minority youth by our own movement. We viewed these suggestions as ways of implementing the perspectives resolution with which we agreed, as points to consider as the movement went through a new experience in a new period.

Looking over the international material was very helpful. We believe the SWP has taken a principled position on Trotskyist fundamentals within the international movement as well as

exercised a considerable degree of patience necessary because of the inexperience and freshness of many of the forces in a number of countries. At the same time, the perspectives fought for in Portugal represent a correct approach to the entire unfolding revolutionary situation in Europe.

We also believe that the SWP has made a serious contribution to the building of the FI, while the efforts of Healy have only led to disintegration and sectarian disorientation. It will be, however, the efforts of the SWP in the U.S. to reach the masses of American workers which will be the most decisive factor to the building of the FI internationally.

We have, of course, theoretical differences with the SWP. We agree with the resolution on the Black question on the central role Blacks will play in the coming American revolution and on the necessity of a continuing fight against all forms of racial discrimination and oppression as part of the struggles of the working class.

The Blacks do not represent, however, a national minority and this is the central reason for the reactionary role Black nationalists have played in the past and for their disintegration in the present period characterized by the moving forward of the whole working class (of course, this movement forward takes on a different tempo and different forms among different layers of the class).

We believe the present majority group within the United Secretariat is an expression of Pabloite revisionism rooted in the theoretical issues raised in 1953. We believe these issues will have to be discussed at some point in the reorientation of the FI.

We believe the Healy group has transformed the Marxist method into an idealist philosophy separated from the material struggles of the working class. This is as much a revision of Marxism as Burnham's attempts in 1940 to separate "program" from class criterion (sic) and method. Nonetheless, a revolutionary party cannot be properly trained outside of a continuous struggle for the Marxist method as part of the

development of a **program, strategy, and tactics** to carry forward the workers struggles in a revolutionary direction.

We believe these questions are best discussed in a **casual and comradely** way in the course of a common experience we all learn in the new period.

We have been allies, as you know, for a number of years in the socialist movement. Despite our recent experience, we are determined to contribute in any way we can to the construction of the revolutionary party. We are convinced of the socialist future of the U.S. and the world. We know the building of a revolutionary party is essential to that future. We are party people.

We wish, therefore, to apply for membership in the SWP and contribute in any way possible to its development.

We are looking forward to a discussion on this proposal and will be glad to help in any way we can. We are always available except from the 2 of July until the 14 when we will be out of town.

Tim

# **Memo to Jack Barnes and Joseph Hansen from Tim Wohlforth**

December 13, 197

**Memo to Jack Barnes and Joseph Hansen**

**"Memorandum on the Ex-Healyite Forces and a Proposal for  
an Education for Socialists Bulletin"**

The publication in Thornett's paper (*Socialist Press*) of the basic document of the expelled majority of the Greek WII marks an important stage in the whole process of splits within the IC and degeneration of Healy which began in 1974. I think it is about time we thought of collecting the material related to these splits into an educational bulletin and in other ways considered how best to bring what forces we can from this milieu towards us while deepening the political distinction (sic) and isolation of the remaining Healy forces.

I think a bulletin containing the main material produced by those who broke with Healy in this period would have the following important uses: First, I believe there is some serious theoretical content in this material despite many inadequacies (sic) expected from people only in the process of a break from their past. The central political theme which runs through all this material is a sharp critique of Healy's ultimatism and sectarianism which is seen as hostile to the method of the Transitional Program. All these forces in one fashion or another are seeking some way to make their policies live in the actual strug-

gles of the working class today as these struggles develop. This does not mean that these forces all have it all worked out, or even form a distinct orientation among themselves — but they are probing in a correct direction. Thus the material has educational value for our comrades and internationally.

A second theme contained in this material is an exposure of an (sic) critique of the organizational measures used by Healy to implement his sectarian policies and authoritarian control of his movement. This is no minor matter and relates to a very long and princepled (sic) history in our movement of the proper methods of dealing with oppositions and constructing movements which are not just personal sects. This is also educational material at a time when it is not just Healy who does not understand these principles (sic).

Such a bulletin would have a second important function. It would be an effective weapon against Healy in several places where he remains a serious competitive threat to our movement. This is certainly true in England and in Australia. For these comrades alone it would be a real service. Then there are other areas as well such as Greece and to a minor extent here.

A third function would be to reach individuals who have left the Healyite groups and who can be brought directly into our movement. Several individuals are now finding their way into the party here who have been formerly influenced by or part of the Workers League and this would be helpful to this process which we can expect to continue. We have a former Workers League member now in the Pittsburg (sic) branch, a comrade in Columbus has just applied for provisional membership, the comrade who recently joined in Allentown was in the past influenced by both the party and the Workers League, a key former Workers Leaguer is now in contact with the Philly branches, and a request for Nancy and my articles on our break with Healy came in from a former Workers Leaguer who I believe is in Tennessee. None of the material on the splits is now currently available to give such people. I am sure the same

process can happen in England and in Australia and perhaps elsewhere.

A fourth function would be to serve as a way to get some basic understanding across to the actual ex-Healyite groups which now stand between us and Healy. We could do this in a properly written introduction which relates Healy's degeneration to the events around 1963.

I envision such a Bulletin as encompassing only the material related to the original splits of these forces. Thus it would not really deal with the subsequent GPU slander campaign except in the introduction. We can consider an educational bulletin on this campaign at a later date as we are still, I am afraid (sic), in the midst of that campaign. It would in any event aid us in combatting that campaign by exposing the reasons for it in Healy's own political and organizational crisis.

Also we would not print Healy's side of the split since he has ample facilities (sic) to do that himself and is presently doing it. At the same time he suppresses the material of his opponents within his own ranks and thus we are performing a public service in making it available.

Of course we would not take political responsibility for the views of those breaking from Healy nor in any way suggest they take political responsibility for us. This could be made clear in the introduction. We just believe these views should be available in a coherent form to the working class public and will clearly state our own views as to what it all means in a separate introduction.

I will outline what I think as a minimum should be in the bulletin and what I think the significance of each contribution would be. We should begin with some material from the Blick-Jenkins group. While this group is somewhat different from the ones to follow it does represent the beginning stage of this whole process. Blick and Jenkins did not split from the SLL as a group. They left individually and then regrouped at a later date. Then they began collaboration with the OCI and Betty Hamilton, an old-time militant who remained in the SLL.

This group however viewed itself as an oppositional group

both within and without the SLL and devoted its early work to a fight against Healy. Even though it never had more than two or three people within the SLL it brought forth an hysterical reaction from Healy including efforts to change his constitution in an authoritarian direction. It represented the only organized internal opposition to Healy since the break of Behan in 1960. It also hit on some central themes such as a labor party orientation, a realistic union policy, and a need to return to the transitional program. It collaborated in the first period of the development of the Thornett group, and thus must be viewed not simply as a section of the ORFCI but a part of the process of the break-up of the IC itself.

Secondly comes our break with Healy. This coincided with the beginnings of rumblings within the trade union section of the WRP and was the actual origin of the CIA-GPU slander drive. I suggest that such a bulletin include our original statement, our second statement in IP, our Cannon article reprinted in *Socialist Press*, as well as perhaps the interview in the *Militant*.

Thirdly is the material of the Thornett group. Here the heart of it is the two first documents written by this group which were suppressed by Healy. Neither to my knowledge have been made available to our membership though they are in general quite good. I would not include their most recent document on international questions. While this is not so good, it is really about another process — their relations to international regroupment. It should however be treated elsewhere in some fashion — such as in an international discussion bulletin with a firm but friendly answer.

Fourth, is this recent document by the Greek ex-Healy group which is in my opinion very good. The critique of Healy's sectarianism is I think superior to that of Tjornett (sic) and the approach to problems of building the movement in Greece more open. Plus it presents for the first time the facts of their expulsion with Healy present in a hotel in Athens organizing it.

Then there is another category which may or may not prove useful to include. There is the break of Whelan in Ireland

which occurred (sic) I think in late 73 or early 74. I do not know what if any documents were produced in this break or if a simple statement from Whelan could be arranged. Its interest lies in the issue around which he broke — the question of the national question in Ireland and Healy's chauvinist approach to Ireland. Also of interest to us is if this comrade is now very close to our section and working with it.

Similarly is the comrade in Australia who has joined our section. Then we know of a split in Portugal which was in any event a very small group but I do not know much about it. It might be worth digging into. The same might be true of the Peruvian split which occurred also sometime in 1973.

All of this is not central to the project but might provide some additional useful material or in any event could be mentioned in a roundup in the introduction.

Of course we are dealing here with a very diverse force whose general thrust is in our direction but which is quite capable of all kinds of halfway houses and convolutions. The Blick group is part of the general problem of the Fourth International in relation to the OCI related forces. There are particular tactical differences with these comrades in relation to their labor party deep entrism. There is also a special opportunity in relation with this group with the particular talents of Blick who like Broue is one of the intellectuals in this international grouping which could be very helpful as part of an international team. There are also certain older comrades related to this group (the Archers, Betty Hamilton) who could contribute to unravelling the international history of the movement and in other ways.

The Thornett group is a special problem. They seem determined at the moment to consolidate a position halfway between us and Healy. Because of it I do not think they are as open to discussion and change as they were perhaps a year ago.

Part of the problem is the peculiar situation in England. With its great many groups claiming to be Trotskyists, the WSL can make as good a claim as many, and better than some. No doubt they are still able to recruit a bit and put out a presentable

paper regularly. Their base in the labor movement of Oxford is no doubt an attractive thing for them but also isolates them from political processes in London to some extent. The confusion of the IMG does not make this formation appear as a center of attraction to them unless they were able to see the problems of the IMG within the broader framework of the development of the FI which they do not at this point.

They are nonetheless a serious group including (sic) some healthy cadres. I believe we should continue to approach them very objectively as part of our whole international outlook. This means I think we should reprint their international statement and critically and educationally answer it, that we should favor discussion with them on the part of the FI, even though they are more difficult to get into a healthy discussion process than the OCI oriented people, etc. I am sure the IMG would favor such a course. At the least it would put them a bit on the defensive internationally, might reach some of their ranks, and also offset any attempt on their part to regroup some sort of IC minus Healy with the Greeks, etc.

The impression one gets reading the Greek document is that they see themselves politically with Thornett. But there are no signs in the document of the kind protection of virginity, etc., which characterizes the Thornett people. They have asked for all of Cannon's works and are studying these and in other ways appear that they may be a bit more open than Thornett. They are clearly a major group in Greece (they claim 200 were expelled) and if a unification could take place at some date it could be a major breakthrough for Trotskyism in Greece.

I think we should deal with them objectively and independently of Thornett as what they are — an independent group without international affiliation quite open to discussion, etc. They could be the most promising of the groups broken from the IC.

Also an international approach to them helps to emphasize that what is now at stake in the FI is not simply a matter of the OCI but a matter of persisting in a correct perspective towards the problem of building the FI opened in the initiative in

1961-63 in a new period when there is considerable motion in the direction of the FI from a number of quarters. Also we should stress that even the OCI initiative involves a number of groups internationally which have their own independent history and their own differences among themselves and with the OCI. There is Lora, who the OCI correctly are critical of, but represents a serious force worth discussing with, the *Politica Obrera* which has had serious forces in Argentina and whose militants have been victimized like the PST in the immediate (sic) period, the Blick group which has a distinct past closer to the ex-Healyite forces, the Canadians, etc.

Then there are the individuals who have passed through Healy and have turned more decisively to us. This includes Nancy and myself, Dermot Whelan, the Australian comrade. This evolution can only have an impact on these other groups and gives us some people with connections with the past experience of these comrades, but without the baggage which many times comes along with more forces which allows immediate independent group existence, and we can play a role in educating these other forces.

To sum up we need an initiative with these groups now which takes on some coherent thrust. First, seems to be some initiative if possible through the U Sec to favor discussions with these forces in order to convince them to become part of the FI. Second, is this educational bulletin which can help with these forces and to carry through a struggle against Healy. Third would be the proposed trip of Nancy and myself to Europe to conduct individual discussions with these people and to participate in the meeting on the GPU business if that is still planned.

I also might suggest as an interim step a short objective article on the Greeks for the IP which I could write. It would simply try to establish the facts in relation to their expulsion and quote from their material to illustrate what they think the break means politically.

Tim

## *Letter to D. Sklavos from Tim Wohlforth*

March 20, 1977

Dear Alan and Dimitri,

This is a personal letter to you who have passed through so many similar experiences as Nancy and I have. I hope you will treat it in that spirit.

I have been giving much thought to the state of the world Trotskyist movement today. As you know I became a Trotskyist in 1953 and have experienced some 24 years of the struggle to build a movement especially here in the United States. This has been my life's work. Certainly by normal criteria of 'success' things have not turned out overly well. In fact I am at this moment more isolated politically than I ever have been during those 24 years. If my goal in politics was just a matter of "positions" and the like I would have no complaints. After all I am a member of the Political Committee (at the moment) of a party of some 1500-2000 members which is not bad as Trotskyist organizations go these days. But that was never my aim. I started out as a Trotskyist to create a leadership in the working class capable of leading a revolution. This is not always the same thing as a position in an organization. . .

The general problem is as follows: our international movement is essentially middle class, a product of the student radicalization of the 1960s, largely separated from and distant from the working class. It (sic) addition, and partly related to this, it is extremely theoretically backward, large parts of it not even, in my opinion Trotskyist!

I know, Comrades, you feel that you in any event are not a product of student radicalization. This is true but I am sure you realize that a section of even your organizations are such a product. In any event can we really find our own way to the revolution apart from and ignoring the problems of the vast bulk of the cadres which have been assembled (if that's (sic) the right word) under the banner of Trotskyism in country after country? . . .

What about the SWP? Has it remained immune from all this. The SWP thinks so because after all it has a highly structured party, things run smoothly, factionalism is rather low, the PC is pleasantly (for some) unanimous except for your old incorrigible (sic) friend here, money still comes in, and recruitment at least keeps up with losses. It is the very model of peace, tranquility and stability. The most difficult problem in the SWP today is how to stay awake at branch meetings. Many comrades solve this problem by going home to bed instead of to branch meetings — at least in New York.

But the SWP is middle class through and through, from top to bottom, up and down and sideways. If we exclude our university educated upper middle class youth, with his newly boughten (sic) blue collar, a type you are familiar with in the IMG, there are probably less than 50 genuine workers in the SWP today.

Sometimes we get a bit bitter about this situation. I come from the middle class and never have pretended otherwise. And yet I have been in the movement 24 years, worked on party salary much of that time, drained whatever I could come up with to raise two children not very well by my first wife, given (sic) whatever I had to the early development to the Workers League and today have nothing nor am I able to get anything. Nancy is a bit different. She comes from a working class family. For a brief while she received some help from a domineering and reactionary uncle. She broke with him when we asked her in the WL, and she also has nothing. We work on subsistence salary at the SWP national headquarters. So does everybody else. But most everybody else comes from upper

class families. So the money is handed over right and left from parents for Bahama (sic) vacations, clothes, health, whatever would be nice. Opera, concerts, plays — we do not even go to the movies. So be it but sometimes we feel a little bitter.

The SWP is a very contradictory party though it has a smooth-running apparatus dedicated to the purpose of covering over contradictions. It is truly **orthodox** on one level. This is part of its make up as well. To deny that is to fail to see its attractive power to many comrades of a revolutionary character within the United Secretariat and also within the SWP. It has what I call a "department of orthodoxy". This includes Fred Feldman of the educational department who is responsible for the excellent publication project of the documents of 1953 (I work closely with him), Les Evans who cranks out article after article of denunciation of the Maoists and edits Cannon's works, Gerry Foley who knows at least 20 languages and knocks out the line on Portugal and other countries rarely getting out of the office, George Brietnam (sic) who with others is responsible for the excellently assembled and edited Trotsky writings series, a comrade who runs an excellent library on the top floor dedicated to preserving the archives of the world Trotskyist movement, etc.

I think the SWP wanted me as an addition to this "department" and also as a good weapon against Healy and a showcase of the openness (sic) of the party to different dissidents from other tendencies. I don't seem to be fitting too well in this new role. Of course I am a great believer in "orthodoxy" in the sense of preserving our basic theoretical conquests from the past. I particularly respect and like the comrades devoted to such work. But, but after 24 years of activity I do tend to wish to connect theory to life, to practise (sic), and I do tend to think through in a bit different way than this layer of the party theoretical matters in dealing with the new developments in the world.

Of course I can and do give classes on Lenin, Trotsky, the labor history, etc. The harder I sock it to them the more they like it. I enjoy this and it has its use. But? But?

Then there is another department, what I call the "department of liberalism", or the "department of good works". This is where we coalesce with all good people around a particular issue — PRDF (we get money from the rich and work with the liberals to promote a very important cause of exposing the FBI), USLA (we do likewise to aid Latin American prisoners), CAIFI (those close to us in the Iranian movement do likewise for Iranian victims), SCAR (We try anyway to get the NAACP and the various reactionary Black nationalists to work with us on South Africa, desegregation, etc.), womens work, deportations and many, many other worthy projects. This adds up to, in my opinion at least 80% of the external work the party does (a little less during national election campaigns.)

Most of this work is actually important and worthwhile. There is nothing wrong in principle (sic) in working with all sorts of people who will agree on specific democratic demands involved. **But**, but it absorbs an abnormal amount of the party's energies, develops a section of the party little beyond liberalism, and is generally not directed into the working class as the central force in the modern world capable of effective fighting for democratic (sic) as well as class demands. And so this work brings about a good deal of the adaptation to reformism (sic) and liberalism which most critics of the SWP spot and concentrate (sic) on. It also produces very little results in recruitment of Trotskyists because party workers in these fields take on the coloration of their liberal friends.

Then there is the apparatus. This is huge by any standards. We have become absorbed into it. We are trying now to get unabsorbed. There are at least 150 people on full time at West St. (SWP national headquarters) plus a growth of a local apparatus in cities with more than two or three branches. This is far beyond anything Healy ever had with a bigger membership. These people are almost completely cut off from party life, generally do not attend branch meetings, live a closed life with other apparatnicks (sic). This absorbs some of the best, most political, and fighting elements in the party for the others tend to be useless even for technical tasks. With this apparatus the

party grinds out an oversize Militant, a weekly IP, a fortnightly Spanish IP, many books, innumerable discussion bulletins, fantastic quantities of communications, whole departments to direct black work, womens work, etc. runs up a \$100,000 a year post office bill and almost as large phone bill, and devotes great and effecient (sic) energy to administering its own monstrous apparatus. It meets continually with itself and at great length.

The PC, for instance, is completely made up of full timers. In fact because Barnes wanted me on the PC, he proposed that I and Nancy go on staff. He wasn't too concerned what we did. PC meetings are held once to twice a week and go on one-half to a full day. No one (except me with great difficulty) disagrees with **anything** but that seems to make the meetings even longer because it doesn't stop people from expressing in a thousand different ways their agreement with what in any event has already be (sic) thrashed out and decided elsewhere (after six months on the PC I am not sure where this is but I assume it is in private conferences among key operators).

It is in my opinion a highly bureaucratized party which aims at a greater degree of bureaucratization. But this now appears limited because money is getting a little harder to come by these days (the 60s generation has been largely drained — the same who supplied the resources for Healy, for the OCI, for Moreno, for all the great apparatus building and headquarters construction our little Trotskyist movement has experienced in recent years — we did it too in the last period of the WL). I can remember the old SWP of 500 or so members run by no more than 12 full timers or the YSA of 200 youth run by — me.

Ah, but it is oh so tempting. It has been so much easier in the last decade of Trotskyism to assemble equipment, apparatuses, finance, with a litle help from the middle class, and then knock out all sorts of things including daily papers than it has been to sell the products of such apparatuses, to win and educate workers to develop real bases within the class itself. And then when the trouble makers come along, the apparatus-nicks (sic) are right in their (sic) to back up the leadership and

get rid of the wreckers. The SWP is in a sense a WRP with a liberal-orthodox line and kid gloves instead of brass knuckles to preserve its leadership.

Oh, I forgot, we also have branches here. Without them there would be no money coming in, no apparatus could survive, and its products would not be sold at all. But here the branch is the lowest of the low, its best elements are drained from time to time to make up the apparatus, the rest shift from city to city like gypsies, dedicated people living out of suitcases — Cannon's professional revolutionaries — but also many comrades trying to build trying to reach workers, trying to squeeze a contact session, a paper sale, a class, a visit to a plant, in between coalition meetings.

We have proposed a shift in priorities towards the branches, towards into the working class, and away from West St. I am afraid the proposal falls on deaf ears — except for the factionally sensitive section of the ear who fears that old Wohlforth and Nancy are reverting to their old disruptive habits.

So that, more or less, is the SWP. . .

I know we have not done everything right here so far. We did adapt a bit when we first joined the SWP. We agreed with their turn and we did our best to make it work, to deepen it. We knew we had made mistakes under Healy and we knew that the SWP had done some correct things which we wanted to learn from — so we gave them the benefit of the doubt and pitched in as best we could. We were also alone, terribly alone. We still are alone. Our early assessment that all there is in America left of Trotskyism is in the SWP is absolutely true. The rest are little radical sickies who are now getting more and more sick because they lived like vultures off of the flesh of the major forces of student radicalization of the 60s. Spartacist now openly admits it is shrinking and it blames this on the working class that is "dripping with fat" and on the Blacks who are "lumpens" and run around mugging everyone. They reflect the demoralized outlook of their milieu. Our choice always was to join the SWP or to remain independent Trotskyists until

something changes. We choose (sic) the former course. Perhaps we should have chosen the latter one? Sometimes I think that way.

The problem is that there is no real internal life in the SWP and thus one is under pressure to adapt to what is or take a factional and largely suicidal course of a two person faction fight. As soon as one sharply defines a serious difference there is 100% guarantee (sic) all 1500 people will line up sharply on the other side and no one will listen to anything. We never wanted to take such a course and we do not want to now. What we were hoping for was a different atmosphere, in which our ideas could be considered among others, in a free and non-factional debate over party policy while we all pitch in to build the movement. So we must wait for such a situation perhaps to arise.

In the interim it is very difficult. Nancy has been placed in the circulation department. Most of her time has been spent on routine clerical tasks. But, of course, last Fall when the subscription drive was in trouble, they sent her all over the Midwest, and found that she could almost single-handedly turn around the situation. Old Workers League methods help in a pinch but are to be carefully avoided and filed under normal times. Right now she is back out in the midwest trying to salvage the current sales drive. She will no doubt accomplish this. Then — back into the file. . .

Last summer we had decided to get out of NYC because of this situation and personally we wanted to live elsewhere for a period (I have been here for 22 years). Barnes convinced us to come on to staff. This has proven to be a mistake in my opinion. I do not believe we can live any longer in this kind of atmosphere and situation. So at the moment I am looking for a job and then Nancy will get off staff in a month or so. This probably means they will remove me from the PC since in this present bureaucratic organization full time seems to be a prerequisite for PC membership.

In any event I am doubtful of the value of being on the PC. Either I endorse what they do uncritically or find myself in a

row which is premature at this point and in any event in which I am completely isolated.

I will give you another example of the problem. I have proposed two projects to them for both Nancy and I to work on. The first is to re-work the book we wrote on the history of the American working class which Mazelis and Co. suppressed the moment we were out. This is of considerable importance because the current struggles of American workers will be deeply influenced by the past experiences both of the working class and the American people as a whole. Any serious perspective today must be grounded in this Marxist understanding of how we got to today. There was vague interest but it was considered low priority. I have not been able to get Nancy freed up from clerical work to help on it. I have only been able to sneak in a little work on it so far. In any event it is doubtful that they will publish it as they have their old orthodox sources for writing and their innumerable pamphlets on feminism and so on.

Then I proposed a collection of material from the two of you plus an introduction by Nancy and I on the reasons for Healy's degeneration. Barnes thought that was a fantastic idea. I was to go to England, and then we would get right to it when I got back. Nancy was not to go to England (though this was promised earlier and she has had to take good brunt of the abuse from Healy) but in any event she would be able to pitch in on this project. Then when I got back Barnes was running around the country helping Sadlowski build Fight Back. He just got back after a month and a half the middle of last week. Somehow the project had been forgotten and there was not even a lot of interest in the reunification question in relation to which we had our discussions. Everything was now Fight Back which would transform things for the SWP.

But then another problem arose. I went ahead and wrote the introduction anyway. At least my part of it, so that Nancy could have something to work on if and when they ever grudgingly allowed her to work on this extremely low priority project. The more I wrote the more I became convinced I must

tell the whole truth not just half of it — as I had to do in my speeches in England (for Christ sakes Alan, I was speaking on an IMG platform in the name of the SWP — what to (sic) you want from me, Blood? — sorry, but the experience certainly brought home to me the limits of my own position now in the SWP). It was not **all** Healy's fault. The SWP was **damned wrong** on Cuba and it helped disorient a whole generation of young Trotskyists which led to deaths in Latin America. And they have yet to admit this even though they have changed in practice on this question anyway. We were completely correct in opposing their liquidationist line on Cuba though we should not have bowed to Healy's theoretical absurdities nor, in my opinion precluded a reunification within which we fought for hard clear principled (sic) Trotskyism against the whole God damn lot of them.

So that is the way I am writing it. So should Nancy ever be able to tackle her part (it is already 100 pages long and I feel at least a contribution to a history of British Trotskyism) we will have produced something unpublishable by the SWP which in any event is not muct inclined to publish a publishable bulletin on the subject. So that is where I am — zero. . .

Of course it is possible things will open up a bit which will permit us to play a bit more active role in the party life for a while despite the difficulties. This combined with theoretical work of preparation for the future would be the best. We must give things here a bit of time I am afraid.

My hope is to get off of staff shortly when I get a job. Then later Nancy can get off and for a period do some work on our book before getting a job. In about a year we hope to save a little to allow us to move out of NYC as we had planned last fall when we got waylaid (sic). This might prove out to be better politically for a period.

Comradely,  
Tim

## **Statement by Tim Wohlforth**

**January 19, 1977**

"We'll take the question of Sylvia Franklin. See, here we have two conflicting historical opinions of Sylvia Franklin. One is Louis Budenz and the other is James P. Cannon. Now, of course, we don't write off the testimony of anti-communists who have broken from the Communist Party.

"No we don't write it off. But we don't accept it as good coin in and of itself. It has to be investigated, which is what Cannon did. Cannon came to the judgment that Sylvia Franklin was not an agent. Budenz insisted that she was.

"That's where it stands historically at this point. I believe that Cannon was right. I accept Cannon's judgment at this point over Budenz.

"Perhaps I'm prejudiced in this thing, but I accept the judgment of a revolutionist over an anti-communist swine.

"Secondly, even if Budenz was right, it means that the comrades have got the wrong GPU agent because by their method, because if Budenz was right, someone covered him up, covered up Sylvia Franklin. That person who covered up, not someone who made a mistake, or made an error of judgment or didn't know, they covered up.

"And if they covered up, they were accomplices of the GPU. Well then, the person who covered up and was an accomplice was James P. Cannon.

"That is really what they're saying and I find that, comrades, difficult to believe, really difficult to believe. If that is your position, you should at least spell it out and add the new accomplice, James P. Cannon, to your list and see how that one grabs people. Because that's the logic of this kind of thinking."

## *Letter to Jack Barnes from Tim Wohlforth*

To the Political Committee and National Field Organizers: This is for your information only

June 26, 1977

Dear Jack,

. . . Both Nancy and I have thought considerably about the latest material from Healy on Caldwell and its implications. It is important to warn the party about provocations. They are definitely getting very flipped out.

But there is another side to it. From the beginning I figured sooner or later Healy would dig something up which has some substance. He has devoted considerable resources to the project. Mitchell is a skilled investigator. We know the GPU particularly under Stalin did devote great resources to penetrating our movemen (sic) So there was a good chance Healy might uncover someone which while in no sense substantiating his wild and wreckless (sic) perverted use of such information to slander a whole movement might lend him some credence if we took a pose of denying or appearing to deny GPU penetration.

In any event it appears to me now highly probable that Sylvia Caldwell was a GPU agent. We now look a little weak still claiming she isn't. Granting the probability that she was — then what does it prove? How were Hansen and Novack connected with her. Clearly it was Jim Cannon who had the main responsibility in this regard. Can anyone in the world movement

believe that Jim was a GPU accomplice or agent? Is is (sic) not something that can happen no matter how careful one is in a small movement, against a powerful state power? Would internal witchhunting of suspected agents help or hurt the construction of the Trotskyist movement which is the mortal enemy of Stalinism? This is how I believe we should now approach the matter...

All for now,  
Tim

**Wohlforth —  
On to  
the Platform  
of Shame**

by David North

January 13, 1977



# Wohlforth— On to the Platform of Shame

by David North

January 13, 1977

Tim Wohlforth, who is presently a member of the revisionist Socialist Workers Party of the USA, will be one of the main speakers at the "Platform of Shame" meeting in London tomorrow, January 14.

Wohlforth is better known as a former leader of the International Committee of the Fourth International, who deserted Trotskyism in 1974.

The organizers behind the "Platform of Shame" rally claim it is for "workers' democracy against slander." But in reality its real purpose is to cover up the need for an inquiry into the circumstances of Leon Trotsky's assassination at the hands of Stalin and the GPU.

For the first time ever, all the petty-bourgeois renegades from Trotskyism who have segregated themselves into a variety of small groups will hold a joint meeting in which they seek to disguise their true political character beneath a "Hate Healy" banner.

Joseph Hansen of the SWP is the principal inspirer of this meeting.

As the leaders of these shrunken sects rub shoulders with each other, perhaps they might ponder over the fact that on August 6, 1940, only two weeks before his murder, Trotsky warned that the "assassins may use a 'Trotskyite' label," and he

was proven correct. Ramon Mercader claimed to be a "disillusioned" Trotskyist.

Whether they like it or not, all those who are participating in this meeting have fallen into the orbit of the GPU's sinister plans.

By opposing an independent Commission of Inquiry into the GPU's role in Trotsky's assassination, because they "hate Healy" more than the GPU, they are providing the shadowy GPU men, who will no doubt attend the meeting, with a cover for new attacks on Trotskyists on the grounds that these have originated out of "a squabble" between Trotskyists.

This was the official excuse which the GPU used to explain away the assassination of Trotsky.

If Wohlforth had been told ten years ago that he would find himself in 1977 on Hansen's platform denouncing the International Committee and Comrade Healy in the company of Pabloites and state capitalists, he would have told the soothsayer to check into an insane asylum.

The Wohlforth who speaks in London on January 14 is but the hollow shell of the man who collaborated closely and fruitfully with the International Committee for 15 years. The International Committee would never deny nor belittle the contribution Wohlforth made to the building of the Trotskyist movement in the United States. It is Wohlforth, not we, who denies his past. In this experience there are lessons of no small importance, as a brief review of his political history will reveal.

Wohlforth first came into the Trotskyist movement out of the wreckage of the Shachtman group — a bad school, but it is to Wohlforth's credit that he broke from it.

When he joined the Socialist Workers Party in 1958 it was already charting its right-wing course back to revisionism. Wohlforth, as a founder of the SWP's youth movement, the Young Socialist Alliance, came into conflict with the party leadership.

By 1960 he was collaborating with the International Committee, fighting against the preparations of the SWP leadership to

break from Trotskyism and reunite with the old European Pabloites.

Wohlforth formed an opposition tendency within the SWP to oppose the politically criminal liquidationist policies of Joseph Hansen, and for this he was removed from the party's Political Committee. In 1964, when Wohlforth spoke out honorably against the treachery of the Ceylonese Pabloites who entered Bandaranaike's bourgeois government with the complicity of the SWP leadership, Hansen booted him out of the party.

Soon after, Wohlforth wrote *The Struggle for Marxism in the United States* in which he assessed the role of Hansen inside the SWP: "Only a party deeply sick with the disease of empiricism would let such a person occupy a leading position in its central leadership."

Wohlforth took the lead in forming the American Committee for the Fourth International which was transformed, after the Third World Congress of the International Committee in 1966, into the Workers League.

Wohlforth became its national secretary. Decisive in the founding of the Workers League was the struggle waged against the middle class, nationalistic radical group called "Spartacist" which rejected internationalism and based itself philosophically on subjective idealism.

It was Wohlforth who assembled the first cadres of the Workers League, insisting upon the continuity of Trotskyism through the International Committee, exposing the orientation of the SWP to the protest wing of the American middle class and its adaptation to Stalinism.

What Wohlforth had to say on these vital political questions are contained in numerous pamphlets which bear his name — none of which, it goes without saying, are sold today by SWP bookstores.

But Wohlforth himself came into ever-deepening political crisis as the development of the world capitalist crisis began to bring about a sharp change in the objective political situation and the relation of the class forces within the United States.

His entire previous development — through no fault of his

own — had taken place within the context of the post-war boom. While the American working class had gained enormous strength during this period within the framework of the mightiest trade union organizations, it was politically held back by the most corrupt and opportunist bureaucratic leadership. The break-up of the boom from the late 1960's on altered the situation.

Wohlforth, who had for several years ably defended the ideas of Trotskyism, now had to make the change from a primarily propagandist practice to one which consciously turned the Workers League toward the American working class.

Particularly after August 15, 1971 — when Nixon abandoned the Bretton Woods agreement by ending the convertibility of the dollar into gold — the old practice of upholding correct ideas by writing certain pamphlets on various subjects was quickly revealed as totally inadequate in the new political situation.

Wohlforth had the responsibility of breaking sharply with the milieu and methods of American radical protest politics in which he himself had been originally trained and which dominated left politics in the United States during the 1950s and 1960s.

He now had to concentrate on the problems of building the revolutionary party in the working class, intervening and recruiting in the struggles of workers, and especially the youth, and training and preparing theoretically the cadre to lead the socialist revolution.

This is where Wohlforth — as others, like Shachtman and then Cannon, before him — became politically unravelled.

Wohlforth did not break with the International Committee because of a misunderstanding. His subjective explosion over the case of his companion Nancy Fields was the form which his capitulation to the pressures of imperialism upon the working class and its revolutionary vanguard took originally.

The facts involved in the affairs of Nancy Fields have been so well documented that they need not be repeated at great length here. Briefly, Wohlforth became involved in a personal

relationship with this woman and decided to conceal from the International Committee and the Workers League Central Committee the fact that her uncle, Albert Morris, was a leading figure in the Central Intelligence Agency. (See report of the Commission of Inquiry in *What Makes Wohlforth Run?*)

Although Fields had been treated as an adopted daughter and financially supported by her uncle until the completion of her university education, this fact had not been declared to the Workers League or the International Committee by either Wohlforth or Fields.

Personal considerations overrode the clear political responsibility that Wohlforth had to obtain a security clearance for Fields. He failed in particular to do this, even after nominating her as a delegate to an important international conference.

For this reason, when the Workers League Central Committee learned of Fields' family connections of CIA personnel in August 1974, it had absolutely no alternative but to remove Wohlforth as national secretary, pending an inquiry, and suspend Fields from membership. Subsequently a Commission of Inquiry was held in New York.

Both Wohlforth and Fields agreed with this procedure and voted for the unanimously-passed motions of the Workers League Central Committee.

But within less than a month, Wohlforth renounced his own vote and resigned from the Workers League. He abandoned the most basic revolutionary principles on the need for security within the revolutionary movement against the police agents of the capitalist state.

Wohlforth's subordination of Marxist principles to the wildest subjective emotions meant his political doom as a revolutionary. He now became prey for all the reactionary social forces produced by imperialism in its death agony.

Revisionists all over the world recognized the completely anti-Trotskyist character of Wohlforth's resignation from the Workers League. Overnight he became a hero in their circles.

When Wohlforth wrote a scandalous account of his removal as national secretary which set out to frame Comrade Healy,

Joseph Hansen immediately dismissed Wohlforth's past disagreements and published his article in his house organ *Intercontinental Press*, commenting that Wohlforth's "sincerity is undeniable and one can only wish him luck on his next venture." (March 31, 1975)

Hansen then proceeded to take Wohlforth in hand in order to exploit his serious weaknesses for the most reactionary purposes. Wohlforth's disregard for security procedures, an intolerable position in the revolutionary movement, fell right into line with Hansen's policy of shielding GPU agents.

It then became for Hansen a matter of encouraging and egging Wohlforth on in his process of political debasement. Hansen applauded when Wohlforth slashed away at all the threads of his past and opened up the pages of *Intercontinental Press* for every new lie. Hansen said, "Get Healy," and Wohlforth responded like a horse to the spurs of his master.

A quarter of a century ago, Trotsky issued the following warning to the SWP minority in 1940:

*"Comrade Abern in his appreciation as in his perspective is moved by hatred. And personal hatred is an abominable feeling in politics. (In Defense of Marxism, New Park Publications, p. 195)*

Wohlforth resolutely turned his back on Trotsky's warning and crawled closer to the ex-collaborator of Abern, who is none other than Joseph Hansen.

In an introduction to a new SWP bulletin entitled "Healy's Big Lie," Wohlforth writes today that he left the Workers League because of "Healy's bullying."

Does Wohlforth seriously believe that he can explain his own political evolution over the past two years with such a miserable and petty slander?

Trotsky once wrote:

*"What is the revolutionist worth who leaves his party simply because someone has sharply criticized his ideas? Petty-bourgeois sympathizers who look on the party as a salon, a friendly club or a masonic lodge are worthless in a revolutionary epoch. If they cannot endure rather sharp remarks, they only show thereby their in-*

*ner emptiness: these people are only looking for a pretext for deserting the barricades. (Writings 1938-1939, Merit Publishers, p. 123)*

Perhaps Wohlforth should ponder this: It is neither the International Committee nor Comrade Healy who are sharing a platform with their enemies of the past 20 years. That sorry fate has befallen Wohlforth himself. It is not what Wohlforth may claim or say he is going to do, it is what he is doing that is decisive.

The men on that platform and those who are unseen but orchestrating the meeting from the sidelines hated the International Committee many, many years before 1974 and have long been waiting to hold this "Hate Healy" rally.

It is Wohlforth who has joined them and that is as a result of his basic political evolution and not at all over an argument with Healy. Such arguments and the security issue of Fields are entirely subordinate to Wohlforth's political positions today.

For example, Wohlforth will be sharing a platform with the state capitalists with whom he broke in 1957; with Ernest Mandel whose rump "Unified Secretariat" was fought by Wohlforth from the day it was founded; and with Pierre Lambert of the French revisionist OCI with whom Wohlforth split in 1971 in solidarity with the International Committee. There will also be Michel Raptis (Pablo) who, as former International Secretary, has done more to liquidate the Fourth International than any revisionist alive.

And, of course, Wohlforth will be speaking as the emissary of Joseph Hansen, of whom he wrote on June 21, 1974 in the pages of the *Bulletin*, newspaper of the Workers League:

*"Joseph is at it again. Hansen has functioned for over ten years as the chief advocate, apologist and downright liar for the Socialist Workers Party in its struggle against the Trotskyist movement."*

Nothing shows Wohlforth's degeneration more clearly than his hysterical accusation, made in his "introduction" commissioned by Hansen for their latest document, that "the resem-

blance between Healy's methods and those of Stalin in the Moscow Trials is striking."

Here Wohlforth has come a full circle. What originally brought him into the Trotskyist movement nearly two decades ago was his struggle to grasp the Marxist analysis of the Soviet state and the origins of Stalinism. He fought against and rejected the subjective, petty bourgeois, anti-communist, approach of Max Shachtman to this basic question.

He learned in the course of this struggle against Shachtman that Stalinism was a class question. He learned that Stalinism was a product not of personalities, but of specific class forces and definite historical conditions. In relation to these, the "personality" question is entirely subordinate.

Wohlforth came to understand, and later taught others, that the growth of the bureaucracy within the Soviet Union was the product of the low level of productive forces within the first workers' state, the weakening of the Soviet working class during three years of civil war, and the isolation of the Soviet state due to the delay and then defeat of social revolutions in Germany and the European countries. The absence of direct material support from a victorious revolution in an advanced capitalist country intensified the economic crisis within the Soviet Union, exemplified by the growing split between the proletariat in the cities and the multi-million peasantry in the countryside.

The bureaucracy emerged as a petty-bourgeois stratum within Soviet society. It was a material expression of the pressure of world capitalism bearing down on the isolated workers' state. The pressure and influence of this bureaucracy was reflected within the Bolshevik Party. The political expression of this influence was the "theory" of "socialism in one country."

As Trotsky explained many times, it was the bureaucracy as "the policemen of inequality" which created Stalin, not Stalin the bureaucracy. Without the material basis of this bureaucracy there could not be Stalinism.

The pressure of the bureaucracy reflected originally in the right-centrist politics of the Stalinist faction in the Bolshevik

Party led to catastrophic defeats of the working class in China and Germany.

These defeats in turn strengthened the bureaucracy which now completed its destruction of the Bolshevik Party and the Third International. Stalinism became the main counter-revolutionary force within the international workers' movement, responsible for the defeats of the European working class in the 1930s.

This was for many years the "ABC" of political life for Wohlforth. Now, as if he had never heard of the classics of Trotskyism — *The New Course*, *The Third International After Lenin*, and *The Revolution Betrayed* — Wohlforth writes that "Healy's methods" are "similar" to Stalin's. Such is the epitome of this political degeneracy.

Wohlforth, of course, cannot point to a state bureaucracy sustaining the International Committee. He is well aware of the conditions under which his ex-comrades of the IC are obliged to work.

They are the conditions of many members of the sections of the Pabloite international. In this wild distortion and abandonment of long-held political convictions is expressed the disorientation of the unstable middle class intellectual beneath the impact of the crisis.

The fact is that Wohlforth's lies serve a definite political end: to cover up what is apparent to everyone, that he has shifted politically to the right. His hatred of Comrade Healy is his hatred of his own past. He is the real practitioner of the "big lie" and not Healy.

The source of his political shift to the right lies not in Wohlforth as an individual, but in the enormous intensification of the world capitalist crisis and the class struggle on an international scale.

Contained within the movement of Wohlforth over the last two years, which seems astounding in its breathless about-face, is the movement of the crisis itself. He has been propelled into the "Platform of Shame" by the most conscious enemies of Trotskyism.

Having broken with every Trotskyist principle he once fought for, Wohlforth is stripped naked of all political independence. He is Hansen's plaything, to be used for whatever unscrupulous purposes he deems necessary. Hansen can afford the luxury of "fusing" Wohlforth onto the SWP Political Committee . . . he likes to keep his footman close to him.

Secretly, the sincere SWP members have nothing but contempt for Wohlforth. He ranks in their midst as a man who is nothing more than a petty-informer, who at the moment any issue crops up that upsets his personal pride will immediately denounce his comrades of yesterday — without the slightest regard for truth or principles. For, like it or not, that is his role.

Such instability has a political logic of its own. Those who are aware of his disastrous subjective weaknesses deliberately pander to Wohlforth in order to drive him down further into the gutter. Hansen is an expert at this, and the results are not pleasant to see.

Wohlforth's London performance directly assists Hansen's desperate efforts to cover up the GPU killers who murdered Trotsky in 1940 and who are at work today. Trotsky is dead but the GPU lives on. The very team of Stalinist agents who were involved in the assassination of Trotsky — with Ramon Mercader himself — are once again preparing for "active" service as they get ready to follow the arch Stalinist Dolores Ibaruri back to Spain.

What is the result of Wohlforth's unbridled subjectivism? To argue, beneath the fraudulent banner of "workers' democracy," the case of Joseph Hansen: for the right of GPU agents to infiltrate the Trotskyist movement and the right of their accomplices to suppress the evidence of their crimes.

What Trotsky said of Shachtman in 1940 applies with greater force to Wohlforth:

*"Had conscious agents of the class enemy operated through Shachtman, they could not have advised him to do anything different from what he himself has perpetrated. (In Defense of Marxism, p. 210)*

# *Appendix*



# Max Shachtman and American Pragmatism

An Obituary by Tim Wohlforth

December 4, 1972

Max Shachtman died on November 4, 1972 at the age of 68. In the course of 50 years of activity in the socialist movement Shachtman evolved from being a leader of the early Communist Party and a founder of the American Trotskyist movement to his position at the time of his death as a supporter of Hubert Humphrey within the Democratic Party, and of the American invasion of Cuba and of American intervention in Vietnam.

What is required now is an assessment of how this evolution took place so that a new generation of revolutionaries can learn from it. We cannot agree with the position of Milton Alvin in the current *Militant*:

*"For those who knew him for many years Shachtman's political decline was sad to watch. At the same time this deterioration does not detract from his earlier contributions to the revolutionary movement in the Communist Party and as a founder of the Socialist Workers Party and the Fourth International."*

Shachtman started with the Russian Revolution, with Lenin and Trotsky, and he ended his life with the CIA and American imperialism. It is not a matter of sadness. This "deterioration" not only "detracts" from his earlier contributions but completely negates them. In fact his present political crimes are all

the more unforgiveable precisely because he began, whatever his limitations, as a revolutionist.

Shachtman died a traitor to his class and a counter-revolutionary. That is the long and short of it.

Shachtman's role in the early Communist and Trotskyist movement was that of a speaker, writer and propagandist. In this respect he was similar to men like Jay Lovestone, Bertram Wolfe and others of the same generation who ended up in other political parties. However, such talents are insufficient for a revolutionist.

It is not enough to adhere to the correct line, formulated by others, and to utilize one's talents to effectively propagate it. Every revolutionist must begin with Marxist theory and on this basis start at all times from the working class, its problems, its situation, its development.

The critical period for Shachtman was the 1939-1940 period of crisis within the Socialist Workers Party. It was at this time that Shachtman delivered a body blow to the Trotskyist movement. If it had not been for the intervention of Trotsky, the continuity of Trotskyism in the United States might have been completely ruptured.

An opposition formed within the SWP on the basis of differences on the Russian question as well as hostility to Cannon, the leader of the SWP. The main theoretical center of the opposition was James Burnham, a professor of philosophy at NYU, and an open anti-Marxist on the question of dialectics. He was assisted by Martin Abern, another founder of the Trotskyist movement, who had a long and disreputable record in the movement for clique factionalism.

Shachtman brought to this opposition the authority of the most important leader of the SWP outside of James P. Cannon himself. Without Shachtman's support the opposition could not have rallied the significant forces it did. Without Trotsky's intervention, it is doubtful if Cannon could have mustered a majority against Shachtman not to mention fighting out the issues in such a way that a political basis remained for the con-

struction of Trotskyism in the United States and elsewhere.

Trotsky exposed the role of Shachtman as well as Burnham and Abern in his classic *In Defense of Marxism*. He exposed Shachtman's capitulation to the anti-Marxism of Burnham. In 1939 Shachtman wrote an article together with Burnham which viewed the differences between the two on dialectics as a matter of taste. "... Nor has anyone yet demonstrated," wrote Shachtman together with Burnham, "that agreement or disagreement on the more abstract doctrines of dialectical materialism affects today's and tomorrow's concrete political issues — and political parties, programs and struggles are based on such concrete issues."

Taking this method forward into a political faction with Burnham a year later Shachtman maintained a position of agnosticism on the nature of the USSR but agreed with Burnham on the "concrete issue" of a refusal to defend the USSR in the course of its war on Finland and Poland. Trotsky exposed how this in turn reflected the anti-communist panic within the petty bourgeoisie at the time when the United States was preparing its entry into World War II. A bloc which began as a "philosophical bloc against Marxism" was transformed into a petty bourgeois political bloc which abandoned the Soviet workers state on the eve of the war and then split from the Trotskyist movement.

Let us look a little closer at Shachtman's method, for what is at issue here is the position of American radical intellectuals as a whole. After all, Shachtman's evolution took place at the same time as men like Sidney Hook and Max Eastman were scurrying for cover, men who like Burnham wanted an "American" Marxism cleansed of the dialectic. Other intellectuals stayed with the Stalinists or left the Stalinists for the camp of American imperialism, never even coming as close to Marxism as the Eastmans and Hooks. Hook, it is well to note, today is a Nixon supporter while James Burnham is a staff writer for the right-wing *National Review*.

Shachtman claimed to agree with dialectical materialism.

However, he maintained that dialectics was a philosophical issue quite separated from the concrete political issues upon which parties are built. This is the position he maintained to his recent death. No doubt his decision to support Hubert Humphrey was based on concrete considerations while he still agreed in the abstract with dialectical materialism.

Shachtman's position on the relation of the abstract to the concrete was itself a pragmatic position. He saw the abstract — both the philosophical method and the application of this method to an understanding of the state or other theoretical concepts — as unreal and unrelated to the concrete facts. Policy is to be based on what best describes these facts and what best works on the basis of this description.

Lenin discusses this question in the *Philosophical Notebooks*:

*"Incidentally, in a certain sense, sensuous representation, is, of course, lower. The crux lies in the fact that thought must apprehend the whole 'representation' in its movement, but for that thought must be dialectical."*

Information comes to us in the form of concrete facts observable through our senses or extensions of our senses in scientific instrumentation. But these facts are not the *whole* of the material world *in its movement*. They are thus abstractions of a part of the material world. Our thought must go beyond this limited grasp of reality to a theoretical understanding of the whole in motion. But to do this we must think dialectically — we must bring into our thinking the conflicting opposites in the real world through which change is taking place.

Thus the critical importance of battling to master dialectical thinking as we construct the party and fight for its program. To fail to do this is to follow Shachtman's footsteps. To fail to battle to break from the methodological thinking of the capitalist class means going over to the political positions of the capitalist class as Shachtman did. One cannot break out of the facts of

capitalism to bring the struggle for socialism into the present struggle of the working class.

The extreme importance of this lesson is shown by the evolution of those who fought Shachtman in 1940 only to return to his method later on. The present leadership of the Socialist Workers Party represents those who stood with Trotsky in 1940 against Shachtman but who failed to listen to Trotsky's warning of the extreme importance of training the youth and the trade union members of the party in the dialectical method.

This has now led to the point where George Novack, self-appointed Marxist philosopher, maintains a position identical with that of Shachtman. Novack writes in a polemic against the International Committee:

*"The Healyite approach to this question is the converse of Burnham's and Shachtman's. Whereas Burnham asserted that dialectics had no value in politics, the SLL maintains that everything else is of subordinate importance. Whereas Shachtman was indifferent to the philosophical aspects and implications of Marxism, the SLL leaders are fanatically obsessed with them."*

Novack feels there lies some golden mean between Shachtman's "indifference" and our "obsession." No doubt he has in mind mild academic interest in dialectics. But the issue is not a quantitative one of intensity but a qualitative one of the relation of dialectics to politics.

The question is still the one posed in 1940: Do the "abstract" questions of dialectics *determine* the political life of a party or do they not? If they do not then the struggle for dialectics has no meaning, no relation to the construction of the party. The party can be — in fact with this approach must be — constructed with a pragmatic method while dialectics is opposed, ignored, or mildly played with separate from party life.

Novack's position on this is clear. He accuses us of drawing "the illegitimate conclusion that dialectical materialism is the central element in the political life of the revolutionary vanguard." He then proceeds to virtually paraphrase Shacht-

man: "The basis of the party is its principles and program, not its philosophical method."

Proceeding in this manner, the SWP has adapted to the petty bourgeois youth forces it has recruited in the recent period just as Shachtman did in 1939 and 1940. These youth continue with the method of the bourgeoisie, pragmatism, which they learned in the universities. As a result there is a complete abandonment of the working class right at the time when the working class is renewing its struggle and the potential for a revolutionary movement here and internationally is so bright and so necessary.

We are neither saddened by Shachtman's evolution nor that of Novack. We rather strengthen our movement through an understanding of the evolution of both of them. At the same time we hold them responsible for their mutual abandonment of Marxism and therefore the working class. This responsibility is all the more heightened by the opportunity they once had to do better, to aid the American working class in breaking from its anti-theoretical traditions.

December 4, 1972

## **GLOSSARY OF NAMES**



## GLOSSARY OF NAMES

**JACK BARNES** — One of the ex-Carleton College students “plugged into” the leadership of the SWP. Trained and hand-picked by Joseph Hansen to lead the SWP. A lawsuit brought by a former SWP member in 1979 alleged that Barnes is a government agent. Presently is SWP national secretary.

**NANCY FIELDS** — Personal companion of Tim Wohlforth. Concealed her family connections with CIA personnel. Refused to collaborate with a Commission of Inquiry set up to investigate these relations. Deserted the Workers League in 1974, joined the SWP in 1975 and later left without an explanation. Current political activities unknown.

**SYLVIA FRANKLIN** — Top GPU agent in the Socialist Workers Party. Born Sylvia Callen in 1914, she attended University of Wisconsin, Class of 1935, where she joined Stalinist National Student League and then the Young Communist League. Married fellow-Stalinist Zalmon Franklin in 1935. After graduation, went to Chicago where she was active in the YCL. Selected by *Daily Worker* editor Louis Budenz and GPU agent Gregory Rabinowitz to work inside the Trotskyist movement in New York City, where she became personal secretary of SWP founder James P. Cannon. Using the name Sylvia Caldwell, she provided the GPU with information which assisted in preparing the 1940 assassination of Trotsky. After Budenz became an informer for the FBI and identified her, Franklin disappeared from the SWP. Married James Doxsee in 1950 and became a midwestern housewife. Testified before US Grand Jury in October 1954 and June 1958. Claimed total loss of memory when questioned by the International Committee in 1977. Defended by SWP as an “exemplary comrade” and cited by Jack Barnes in 1983 as his “hero.”

**JOSEPH HANSEN** — Stalinist agent from Salt Lake City who infiltrated the Trotskyist movement in 1934. Became a secretary to Trotsky in Mexico in 1937 and helped prepare the assassination. After

assassination he offered his services to the FBI and eventually became the chief US government agent in the SWP. Supervised the recruitment and training of Carleton College students who took over the SWP in the 1960s. Exposed as an agent by the International Committee as a result of *Security and the Fourth International* investigation. Died in January 1979 at the age of 68.

**JAY LOVESTONE** — Born in 1898. Leader of the American Communist Party after the death of Charles Ruthenberg and the expulsion of Cannon. Opponent of William Z. Foster, he was notorious for his factional methods. Supported Bukharin in 1928 and this cost him his leadership post after Stalin prevailed. Expelled from the CP, led his own tendency during the 1930s. Went over to imperialism and became a chief adviser for the Central Intelligence Agency.

**GEORGE NOVACK** (William F. Warde) — Accomplice of Joseph Hansen and leading philosophical exponent of pragmatism in the SWP.

**GREGORY RABINOWITZ** — GPU agent who worked as head of the Russian Red Cross as a cover. Supervised GPU network in the United States that infiltrated the SWP and helped prepare the assassination of Leon Trotsky.

**JAMES ROBERTSON** — Petty-bourgeois American radical and long-time behind-the-scenes errand boy for Joseph Hansen. Heads the middle-class Spartacist sect. Advocates destruction of Solidarity movement in Poland and opposes national liberation struggles against imperialism.

**BARRY SHEPPARD** — Close associate of Jack Barnes in SWP leadership.

**ALAN THORNETT** — Renegade from the Workers Revolutionary Party in Britain. Worked secretly under the direction of two agents of the OCI, Robin Blick and Mark Jenkins, to build an anti-Party faction in the WRP. Refused to abide by Party discipline and expelled from WRP in 1974.

**MARK ZBOROWSKI** — Stalinist agent who infiltrated the Trotskyist movement in Paris in 1934 and played a major role in organizing the assassinations of Trotsky's son Leon Sedov as well as Fourth Inter-

national secretaries Erwin Wolf, Rudolf Klement and also the defector from Stalinism, Ignace Reiss. Entered the United States in 1941 with the assistance of Lola Dallin and George Novack, where he continued spying for the GPU. Tried for perjury and convicted in 1958. Sentence overturned on appeal, retried and convicted, and served a brief prison term in 1962. Provided prestigious academic posts as a medical anthropologist. Lives today in an affluent section of San Francisco. Received assistance from the SWP in 1982-83 in fighting a legal subpoena that would have compelled him to testify on his activities inside the Fourth International.











**The documents in this volume comprise the record of a fundamental and crucial chapter in the history of the struggle for Trotskyism in the United States — the fight against the renegade, Tim Wohlforth. At issue in this struggle, waged by the Workers League in solidarity with the International Committee of the Fourth International, was the defense of the revolutionary party of the working class — its traditions, history, principles, organizational security, and, at the most essential level of theory, the dialectical materialist method that is the foundation of cadre-training.**

**The publication of this volume is testimony to the fact that the lessons of the struggle against Wohlforth, despite the passage of ten years, have lost none of their political urgency. On the contrary, it is now more clear than ever that the issues raised by Wohlforth's desertion from the Workers League in September 1974 were profoundly related to the development of a new stage in the world capitalist crisis and the most fundamental political, theoretical and historical questions confronting the Trotskyist movement on a world scale.**

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