

Marxist Bulletin No. 1

In Defense of a Revolutionary Perspective

—A Statement of Basic Position by the Revolutionary
Tendency. Presented to the June 1962 plenary meeting
of the SWP National Committee.

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PREFACE

The material bearing on the history and struggles of the Revolutionary Tendency inside the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) occupies a special place in the Marxist Bulletin series. Without a serious and critical attitude toward its own development, no political formation can go beyond the first stages in meeting the central challenge facing Marxist-Leninists in the United States--the building of a revolutionary party.

Marxist Bulletins Nos. 1,2,3, and 4 are all devoted to the period from the consolidation of the Revolutionary Tendency (RT) within the SWP to the expulsion of the RT leadership from the SWP, which covered the two-year span, 1962-1963.

Origin of the Revolutionary Tendency

The nucleus of the RT originated in the central leadership of the Young Socialist Alliance, and first came together as a left opposition to the SWP Majority's uncritical line toward the course of the Cuban Revolution. This preliminary dispute culminated in the adoption of a thoroughly revisionist position by the SWP Majority at the June 1961 party convention. The party's theoretical revisionism, together with its abstentionist and opportunist practice, were carried into the party's general international line and began to turn the party away from a revolutionary perspective in the United States as well. (The causes of this dramatic degeneration of the SWP constitute a principal theme in Marxist Bulletin No. 2, "The Nature of the SWP".)

Need for a Basic Document

The left oppositionists responded to the general assault of the Majority upon the party's past positions by counterposing a revolutionary program. This document, "In Defense of a Revolutionary Perspective" (INDORP for short), achieved three results which led to a crystallization of the RT: (1) INDORP analyzed and made explicit the general political basis of the left opposition; (2) in gaining co-authors and signers, INDORP drew into the organized opposition a number of older party comrades, thus giving authority to the RT beyond its numbers; (3) INDORP linked the American opposition to the Majority of the International Committee (IC) of the Fourth International by endorsing the international resolution prepared by the British Socialist Labour League and adopted by the IC, "The World Prospect for Socialism."

Drafting INDORP

"In Defense of a Revolutionary Perspective" was the result of a lengthy, collective effort. The need for such a statement

was first advanced by Tim Wohlforth in the Fall of 1961 with the advice of Gerry Healy in Britain. Geoffrey White authored the first draft; comrades Shane Mage and Cliff Slaughter contributed sections and criticism on Marxist method and theory; Wohlforth furnished general editorial expansion, and several others made lesser contributions.

The final approved version was presented by the Revolutionary Tendency to the National Committee of the SWP in March 1962. After the expanded party plenum in June 1962, where the document was voted down 43 to 4, it was printed for the SWP membership in the internal Discussion Bulletin (Vol. 23, No. 4, July 1962). This statement of basic position by the RT now becomes available to the general radical public for the first time.

After INDORP

Even as INDORP was being introduced into the party discussion, the contradiction between the course of the SWP and a revolutionary position was becoming ever more acute and apparent. Thus the RT had just affirmed in INDORP that the opposition regarded the SWP as "the American section of our world party" (section "Where We Stand", point 10). Yet the co-thinkers of the RT in Britain, the Socialist Labour League, felt obliged in July 1962 to attack the SWP in a major document significantly entitled "Trotskyism Betrayed--The SWP Accepts the Political Method of Pabloite Revisionism." In September of the same year IC representatives at an international meeting officially stated that "they did not politically represent the SWP".

Since the IC which thus repudiated its earlier ties with the SWP was then equivalent to the world party, the relation of the SWP Majority to the RT in the U.S. was rendered moot. Thus within the American tendency arose a necessary political discussion to examine the nature of the SWP and clarify the relation of the RT to the SWP Majority (see subsequent numbers of the Marxist Bulletin series).

Despite the demise of the SWP as a revolutionary organization, "In Defense of a Revolutionary Perspective" remains unimpaired to this day as a statement of basic position.

SPARTACIST Editorial Board

January 1965

IN DEFENSE OF A REVOLUTIONARY PERSPECTIVE

-- A statement of Basic Position

The decisive instrument of the proletarian revolution is the party of the class-conscious vanguard. Failing the leadership of such a party, the most favorable revolutionary situations, which arise from the objective circumstances, cannot be carried through to the final victory of the proletariat and the beginnings of the planned reorganization of society on socialist foundations. This was demonstrated most conclusively--and positively--in the 1917 Russian Revolution. This same principled lesson derives no less irrefutably--even though negatively--from the entire world experience of the epoch of wars, revolutions and colonial uprisings that began with the outbreak of the First World War in 1914.

"Theses on the American Revolution"--
adopted at the 12th National Convention of
the SWP in Chicago, November 15-18, 1946.

Introduction: The Method of Marxism

The contradictory character of the present historical period presents the gravest dangers, as well as the highest potentialities, to the Trotskyist movement. The combination of the great revolutionary upsurge throughout the colonial and non-capitalist sectors of the world with the seeming stabilization and progress of capitalism in its heartland; the prolonged crisis of proletarian leadership and domination of the world labor movement by social-democratic and Stalinist agents of capital combined with the continual resurgence of working class struggle; these are the terms of a situation in which our world movement constantly risks ideological disorientation and consequent political collapse as a revolutionary force. Only the fullest grasp of the dialectical materialist method, the constant development of Marxist theory, will enable our movement, in a perpetually changing reality, to preserve and develop its revolutionary perspective.

The essence of the political methodology of Marxism is to pose all problems actively from the specific and purposive viewpoint of the only consistently revolutionary class in modern society, the proletariat. This proletarian class viewpoint has its highest expression in the scientific theory of Marxism. Marxists, in other words, analyze all problems in terms of a rigorous and scientific theoretical structure. At the same time they are full participants in the historical process itself as the most advanced section of the working class and their action is guided by theory. Thus the conclusions derived from Marxist theory, and accordingly the theory itself, are continually being tested in practice.

"Revisionism" is the view that every new development requires the abandonment in practice of basic aspects of previously held theory. Ultimately this drift from the dialectical materialist method leads to a drift from the working class itself. Marxism, on the contrary, develops through the continual integration of new elements, new realities, into its theoretical structure. It explicitly criticizes and rejects, where necessary, erroneous or outlived propositions, while maintaining at every point its character as a systematic, rigorous and unified scientific structure.

The pressure of the capitalist class is most intense precisely against this methodology of Marxism, which its ideological agents revile as dogmatic fanaticism. Unless Trotskyists are able to use and develop Marxist theory they, like many other Marxists before them, inevitably succumb to this pressure, fall into a vulgar, pragmatic, empiricist view of reality, and convert Marxian theory into a set of sacred dogmas useful only to provide labels which can be slapped on an unruly and uncomprehended reality.

Particularly in the present period, when the working class seems to the empiricist to be under the complete and everlasting domination of reformist bureaucracies, this ideological pressure is the result of a terribly strong social pressure. The Trotskyist groups feel small and isolated at the very moment that significant leftist forces are clearly in motion throughout the world. These forces, however, are under the leadership of non-proletarian tendencies: "left" social democrats, Stalinists of one or another variety, and "revolutionary" bourgeois or petty-bourgeois groups in the colonial countries.

The revolutionary party, if it does not possess a real comprehension of the methodology of Marxism, is condemned merely to reflect the contradiction between its own relative isolation and the mass upsurges. This reflective pose finds expression in an objectivist outlook where one views from afar an unfolding panoramic process from which the conscious active factor is completely divorced. Instead of posing the problem of principled struggle against these ultimately pro-capitalist leaderships with the goal of developing a new proletarian leadership, the party then seeks only to influence the movement as it is and in order to affect the policy of the existing leadership, enters into a process of political, organizational and theoretical accommodation to, and regroupment with, these alien tendencies.

Once the thread of Marxist theory is lost, the concepts of other social forces come to dominate the thought of socialists. The party thus comes to lose its revolutionary perspective-- it comes to see in other political and social groupings, rather than in the working class led by its Marxist vanguard, the leadership of the revolution. The Trotskyists relegate themselves to an auxiliary role in the historical process.

The world Trotskyist movement has been in a political crisis for over ten years. This crisis has been caused by the failure of theory and leadership in the Fourth International, resulting in the loss of a revolutionary perspective by important sections of the Trotskyist movement under conditions of isolation from the masses and under pressure from the capitalist class through its petty-bourgeois agents within the labor movement. Only the re-establishment of a revolutionary perspective in our world movement and the definitive rooting out of defeatist, accommodationist, and essentially liquidationist politics from our ranks can lay the basis for the rebuilding of our world cadres and thus for the victory of the world revolution.

It was Pablo's theory of accommodation to alien tendencies that led those Trotskyists determined to preserve a revolutionary perspective to break with the International Secretariat (IS) in 1953, a move crippling to the International, but deemed by the party at that time to be essential to the preservation of a principled revolutionary movement. However, the continued paralysis of our world forces since that time and the present deep division within the International Committee (IC) are signs that the forces that were operating on Pablo were also affecting, to a lesser degree, the Socialist Workers Party. With the passage of the eight years since the split the signs of this same disease in our own ranks are reaching major proportions. We feel that this process has now reached a point where resistance is essential.

In this statement we are attempting to assess the degree to which this empiricist methodology and these accommodationist views have penetrated our party and what we feel can be done to reaffirm our revolutionary world perspective. It is only on this political basis that we will be able to rebuild our world forces. This statement is our contribution to the forthcoming party plenum which, in our opinion, should prepare the party for participation in the discussion now going on in our world movement. As this discussion is preliminary to the forthcoming World Congress of Trotskyism, called by the International Committee of the Fourth International, our political participation in it is essential.

The Nature of Pabloism

Pabloism is essentially a revisionist current within the Trotskyist movement internationally which has lost a revolutionary world perspective during the post-war period of capitalist boom and the subsequent relative inactivity of the working class in the advanced countries. The Pabloites tend to replace the role of the working class and its organized vanguard--that is, the world Trotskyist movement--with other forces which seem to offer greater chances of success. Fundamental to their political approach is an "objectivist" world outlook which sees capitalism collapsing and Stalinism shattering under the impact of an abstract panoramic

world historic process, thus removing the necessity for the conscious intervention of the working class through its Marxist vanguard. The role of the Trotskyists is relegated to that of a pressure group on the existing leaderships of the workers' organizations which are being swept along by this revolutionary process.

In its methodology the Pablo group is essentially empiricist. It reacts to the constantly changing world political situation with seemingly radical changes of political line but without recognizing, much less giving a theoretical accounting for, the previous errors. Underlying these reversals, however, is a fundamental proposition: the existence of a "new world reality" in which the balance of forces has shifted definitively in favor of socialism and in which, accordingly, resolution of "the crisis of proletarian leadership" is no longer the sine qua non of the world socialist revolution. On this basis, the Pabloites have consistently maintained their objectivist approach, and have proposed one substitute after another for the revolutionary role of the working class and its Marxist vanguard.

In 1949 Pablo put forward his theoretical conception of "centuries of deformed workers states." Reacting impressionistically to the expansion of Stalinism in East Europe and China, he envisioned a whole historic epoch during which bureaucratized states of the Stalinist type, not workers' democracy, would prevail. This theory was as deeply revisionist as that of Burnham and Shachtman, which projected a historical epoch for "bureaucratic collectivism." Like the Shachtman-Burnham theory, this theory denied a revolutionary perspective for our movement and saw in Stalinism the objective expression of the revolutionary forces in the world.

Soon thereafter, Pablo, in his "War-Revolution Thesis" made this theoretical abandonment the basis for a new political line. World War III, he forecast, would break out in the immediate future. This war would be essentially a class war. It would result in the victory of the Red Army (aided by the European workers led by the Communist parties), and the formation in Germany, France, and England of "deformed workers states." The experience of East Europe and China would be repeated in the advanced capitalist countries of the West. Therefore, in the short time remaining before the onset of the "War-Revolution," it was essential for the Fourth International to integrate itself, on any terms and at all costs, into the Stalinist parties (where there were mass parties) which would soon "project a revolutionary orientation" and emerge as the objective leaders of the European revolution.

These concepts (never subsequently repudiated by Pablo) were present in somewhat concealed form in the main theses of the Third World Congress of the F.I. (1951) and immediately thereafter were openly revealed as the practical orientation of the Pablo leadership. During the period around the Third World Congress,

Pablo carried on a worldwide factional battle against the French, British and Canadian sections of the world movement in order to develop forces capable of carrying out this essentially liquidationist entry into the Stalinist parties. In this country the Cochran grouping was a legitimate reflection of Pabloism. There were two elements involved in the Cochran group. The Bartell-Clarke wing wished to adapt to the Stalinist movement in this country while the Cochran wing wished to adapt to the labor bureaucracy. Both sections of this liquidationist minority shared with Pablo the same objectivist outlook which no longer gave to our world forces any independent role.

The "Fourth (1954), Fifth (1957) and Sixth (1961) World Congresses" (these were not "world congresses" but rather meetings of a revisionist faction of the world movement) of the Pabloites have all expressed this outlook. There were, of course, important political shifts as the Pabloites responded impressionistically to the changes in the world situation. The later congresses do not emphasize the imminence of war, nor is everything banked on the onrolling sweep of Stalinism. Rather they tend to see the Stalinist bureaucracy collapsing automatically without the necessity of our own conscious intervention.

As a new substitute for the working class and its vanguard, the colonial revolution tends to replace the Stalinist bureaucracy, damaging the critical importance of the advanced working class and its struggles. The Sixth World Congress formally declares that the new "epicenter of World Revolution is in the colonial sector." Thus socialism is now advancing on the tide of leaderless revolution in the colonial countries.

In 1949 it was a form of Stalinism that would prevail for centuries; in 1951 it was imminent war that would force the Stalinists to project a revolutionary orientation; today it is the colonial revolution that is unfolding automatically. At no time has it been the working class organized under Marxist leadership that is central in the world revolutionary strategy of Pabloism.

On the tactical level the Pabloites generalized their deep entrust perspective to include the social democratic and centrist parties in Europe and the national bourgeois formations in the colonial areas. They entered these parties with an adaptationist political line; they were seeking to pressure the leadership of the centrist opposition into becoming the revolutionary leadership; they were not entering in order to build a new alternative revolutionary leadership based on the rank-and-file workers.

The role of Pabloism in England and in Belgium expresses clearly in action the true nature of this tendency. In England our comrades have devoted many years to the development of an alternative revolutionary leadership to both the right-wing Labour

Party leadership and the Stalinists. They have based their tactics at all times on the rank-and-file class conscious workers.

The Pabloites in Britain, with the full support of the IS center, have had another orientation. They have attempted to function as a pressure group on centrist trends within the BLP. Thus they state in Socialist Fight (organ of the English Pabloites): "Above all pressure must be applied at Branch and district level" and the Fourth International (Fall, 1960) sees "The central task of the British revolutionary Marxists" not as building an alternative revolutionary leadership, but rather "regrouping inside the Labour Party, all these scattered forces of the labor left." When our British comrades organized the Socialist Labour League, the Pabloites joined the hue and cry of the BLP leadership and the capitalist press and attacked them for "irresponsible adventurism."

Since the formation of the SLL, our comrades have continued to gain substantially within the BLP especially from the youth. The Pabloites, on the other hand, have been unable to build an effective group in England. The British experience has dramatically proved that only an entry policy based entirely on an attempt to create an alternative revolutionary leadership representing the true interests of the rank-and-file workers can build an effective force. Such a policy is based fundamentally on the maintenance of a revolutionary world perspective for the working class under Marxist leadership. The policy of the Pabloites in Britain is a reflection of their abandonment of a revolutionary world perspective: their seeing in others the forces with revolutionary potential. Thus the differences between Pabloism and Trotskyism in England are fundamental, not simply tactical.

The same lesson can be learned from the Belgian experience. In Belgium the Pabloites have had a group functioning for several years under the leadership of one of the IS's central international figures. This group has devoted its energies to seeking positions of influence within centrist circles in Belgium rather than attempting to develop roots on a rank-and-file basis in the Belgian working class. During the 1960-61 Belgian General Strike, the most important radical development on the Continent in several years, the Belgian Pabloites were unable to put forward a revolutionary political line independent of the centrist circles they were working in. Thus Trotskyism played no independent political role in the revolutionary events and the strike generally failed because of the inadequacy of the centrist trade union leaders that the Pabloites were supporting. The inability of the Pabloites to play an independent role in these crucial events was simply an expression of a central political outlook which places little emphasis on the revolutionary role of our movement.

After 12 years of experimentation the Pabloites have little to show for their efforts. The European movement has been decimated under their leadership. The Latin-American sections of the IS are small and weak. The only organizations of the continent having real working-class roots are affiliated with the IC. In Asia all they have is the formal affiliation of the LSSP (Ceylon) which, over the years, has been evolving in an opportunist direction and at present has reached the point of giving critical support to the bourgeois government.

The International Committee, despite its organizational weaknesses and political problems that have plagued it (due to lack of clarity on Pabloism in some groups), contains the only sections of our world movement that have shown substantial, solid growth. The development of the British section from a small group into a sizable, effective organization with deep roots in the working class and significant support among the youth is a major development for the whole world movement. The growth of the new Japanese section and of the Chileans and Peruvians was based on their break with Pablo.

The experience of our Chilean group illustrates this pattern. In 1954 the Chilean Trotskyist group split over the decision of the "Fourth World Congress" that it should carry out a deep entry tactic in the SP. Fifty members of the group followed the IS's instructions and entered the SP while only five comrades refused to enter and broke with the IS. These five comrades became the nucleus of the present section of the IC in Chile. This section today is the strongest Trotskyist force in Chile with important roots in the Chilean trade union movement and a very fine potential for the future.

The Argentine section of the IC, however, like the LSSP, has fallen into an essentially Pabloite political line. Its adaptation to the current left capitalist leadership of the Argentine working class has brought it to glorify Peron and to present itself merely as a left-Peronista movement. Organizational advantage bought at such a price can only pave the way for ultimate disaster. The evolution of the Argentine group can be attributed to the failure of the IC to carry through the political struggle against Pabloism in the period since the 1953 split.

Our whole approach to the problem of our world movement must therefore begin with an understanding that Pabloism is a revisionist current which negates the essential revolutionary content of Trotskyism while still clinging to a formal adherence to Trotskyism. It is as much a revision of Trotskyism as Kautskyism was of Marxism. The present division of our world forces is the most fundamental and longest lasting political crisis in the whole history of our world movement. What is at issue is the preservation of Trotskyism itself!

In 1953, our party, in the "Open Letter" (Militant, 11/11/53), declared that "The lines of cleavage between Pablo's revisionism and Orthodox Trotskyism are so deep that no compromise is possible either politically or organizationally." The political evaluation of Pabloism as revisionism is as correct now as it was then and must be the basis for any Trotskyist approach to this tendency.

The Differences with the SLL

Over the past year, differences within the IC forces that had been smouldering for some time broke out into the open. Differences first began to crop up between the SWP and the Socialist Labour League over conflicting approaches towards Pabloism. The SLL insisted that the time had come to deal with Pabloism politically rather than simply with organizational unity proposals. The British felt that a political approach must begin with an understanding of Pabloism as a revisionist political current. They therefore insisted that a full political discussion must precede any unity moves internationally, for the unification of the world movement must be based firmly on a sound principled political program.

The SWP majority defended exactly the opposite approach. They saw political differences between themselves and Pabloites growing less. Quite logically, from this point of view, they therefore emphasized the organizational basis for unity, taking it for granted that the political basis existed.

When a situation occurs within our world movement creating confusion on such an essential question as the role of the movement itself, it is necessary to prepare a document which presents the essential views of Trotskyism in application to the current world situation. Then it is possible, on the basis of discussion around such a basic document, to determine exactly wherein lie the agreements and disagreements in our world forces. The SLL took on this responsibility and prepared its International Resolution.

This resolution puts forward all the essentials of a revolutionary perspective. It starts with the centers of world capitalism, understanding that it is the struggle of the working class in these centers which is critical for the development of the World Revolution. It replaces ephemeral hopes in an automatic revolutionary process in the colonial countries with revolutionary optimism about the future struggles of the working class in the advanced countries. It sees in the working class the only force in modern society that can overthrow capitalism on a world-wide basis. It sees the world Trotskyist movement as the only movement which represents the true interests of the working class --as the only movement capable of carrying through the world revolution. It sees in the existing cadres of world Trotskyism

the essential conscious factor in the modern world. It relates all revolutionary tactics, all revolutionary strategy to the development of the working class and its vanguard--the world cadres of Trotskyism. It puts Trotskyism, embodied in the living human beings organized into existent groups and parties, back into our historical perspective.

Significantly, the majority responded to this initiative not by warmly supporting this important effort but by producing an international resolution of its own. While the SWP document is not designed as a worked out theoretical alternative to the position of the SLL--it is equivocal, and contains in eclectic fashion many absolutely correct propositions--as a whole it expresses a different political position from that of the SLL. Certainly, if it did not, it would be difficult to explain why the majority wrote the resolution immediately after receiving the SLL resolution. It is also significant that the majority rejected minority amendments containing the same essential line as the SLL resolution because, they claimed, these amendments projected a line contradictory to the majority resolution.

The SWP Majority's International Line

The majority international resolution marks an important political step in the direction of the objectivist international outlook and methodology of the Pabloites. The resolution begins by claiming that the victory of the Chinese Revolution "definitively altered the world relation of forces in favor of socialism." This concept permeates the document and is repeated throughout in one form or another.

The conception of a qualitative transformation of the world situation is the essence of the Pabloite "new world reality" which can be found in the documents of the "Third, Fourth, Fifth and Sixth World Congresses." In our 1953 resolution "Against Pabloist Revisionism" (Discussion Bulletin A-12, November, 1953), which analyzed the central document of Pablo's "Fourth World Congress," "The Rise and Decline of Stalinism," we rejected this concept, stating: "A rounded review and realistic resume of the net result of the march of the international revolution from 1943 to 1953 leads to this conclusion. With all its achievements and greater potentialities, the failure of the revolution to conquer in one of the major industrialized countries has thus far prevented the revolutionary forces of the working class from growing strong enough to overwhelm the Kremlin oligarchy and give irresistible impetus to the disintegration of Stalinism. There has not yet been such a qualitative alteration in the world relationship of class forces.

"Up to date the counter-revolutionary intervention of the bureaucracy itself in world politics has forestalled the objective conditions for such a consummation. It caused the revolution to recede in Western Europe, weakened the working class in relation to the class enemy, and facilitated the mobilization of the world counter-revolution. The struggle between the forces of revolution and counter-revolution is still inconclusive, and far from being settled. This very inconclusiveness, which it strives to maintain, at the present time works to the advantage of the Kremlin."

This brings us to the heart of the matter. In 1953 our party rejected the concept that the balance of forces is now in favor of revolution. We did this because, in our opinion, the decisive factor was the conscious element. As long as the working class does not come to power in an advanced country, the revolutionary forces cannot be dominant on a world scale. Stalinism and social democracy are essential forces preventing the working class from coming to power in these countries--therefore it is our task to defeat them and create a Trotskyist vanguard movement of the working class. This was our strategic orientation in 1953.

Today the SWP resolution claims that the forces of revolution are dominant despite the fact that the working class since 1953 has not come to power in an advanced country and our own forces remain weak. Thus, consciously or not, the SWP leadership has accepted the central theoretical position of Pabloite revisionism.

This objectivism is reflected in other ways throughout the document. The resolution tends to minimize the danger of Stalinism as a world counter-revolutionary force. In fact it goes so far as to suggest that Khrushchev is taking a "left turn," allying himself with the colonial revolution. Without specifying the counter-revolutionary objectives and methods of Kremlin diplomacy, the resolution "recognizes" that "in the diplomatic arena, since the death of Stalin, the Soviet Union has displayed growing boldness and flexibility, scoring gains among the 'neutral' countries through aid programs and through exposures of Washington's aggressive policies" and that "in this 'new reality' of enormous pressures, inviting openings and deadly dangers, the Soviet bureaucracy has had to revise and adapt and shift its line." In the Plenum discussion on Cuba last year Comrade Stein made the same point in a more blatant fashion, stating: "...The Soviet Union is compelled today, instead of playing a counter-revolutionary role--to place itself on the side of revolution." (SWP Discussion Bulletin, Vol. 22, No. 2, p. 21.)

In 1953 the Pabloites took an identical stand in their resolution. They did not claim that Stalinism was no longer a counter-revolutionary force--rather they claimed it no longer could be effective as a counter-revolutionary force because of the objective sweep of revolution. At that time we stated clearly:

"It is true that world conditions militate against the Kremlin's consummation of any lasting deals with imperialism or its bargains with the national bourgeoisie. But the objective consequences of its attempts to maintain the status quo or arrive at such agreements have much more than 'limited and ephemeral' practical effects. Its maneuvers help block the advance of the revolutionary movement and adversely affect the world relationship of forces. The bureaucracy together with its agencies is not simply a passive reflector and acted-upon object of the world relationship of forces; the bureaucracy acts and reacts on the international arena as a potent factor in shaping the latter...Not only is the vanguard miseducated by this minimizing of the pernicious results of the Kremlin's course, but it is disarmed in the struggle to dispel illusions about Stalinism among the workers in order to break them from Stalinist influence...The fact that the Soviet bureaucracy couldn't 'smash and arrest' the Yugoslav and Chinese revolutions where the revolutionary tide broke through its dikes, doesn't wipe out the fact that elsewhere, by and large, the bureaucracy succeeded in turning the revolutionary tide in the opposite direction. This has influenced the relationship of forces for an entire period."

In addition to minimizing the real danger of Stalinism as a counter-revolutionary world force, the resolution accepts the Pabloite view that the changes in the world objective situation have ended the isolation of the Soviet Union and declares bluntly: "The Soviet Union is no longer isolated internationally." But in 1953 we stated:

"How then, can it be so unqualifiedly asserted in the resolution that the isolation of the S.U. has disappeared? The isolation has been modified and mitigated, but not at all removed. The pressures of the imperialist environment weigh upon the entire life of the Soviet people."

At that time we insisted that only the breakthrough of revolution in Western Europe could end the isolation of the Soviet Union.

Much of the treatment of Stalinism in the resolution is given over to speculation on the fissures within the bureaucracy with the "break-up of Stalinist monolithism." However, in 1953 we clearly stated:

"The proposition that no significant segment of the bureaucracy will align itself with the masses against its own material interests does not mean that the bureaucracy would not manifest deep cleavages under the impact of an uprising. Such disorganization, disintegration and demoralization was observable in East Germany. But the function of a revolutionary policy is to organize, mobilize and help lead the masses in their struggle, not to look for, even less to bank upon any real break in the bureaucracy."

In 1953 we reasserted the essential concept of the Transitional Program that the destruction of Stalinism required the conscious intervention and revolutionary struggle of the working class both within the Soviet countries and in the advanced countries. And for the victory of such struggle a Marxist vanguard party was essential. Much is made in the 1953 statement of the fact that while the Pabloite resolution formally mentions the political revolution it does not specifically refer to our strategy of creating Trotskyist parties in these countries. The current SWP resolution not only does not mention the need to create these parties--it does not even mention the political revolution. Instead the restoration of Soviet democracy is treated simply as a reflex of the objective changes in the world situation and within the Soviet Union.

The majority resolution formally states that the struggle of the working class in the advanced countries is the critical struggle and thus differentiates itself from the position of the Pabloite "Sixth World Congress" resolutions. However, this correct proposition, far from being central to the resolution and its perspectives for revolutionary strategy, was in fact inserted only after the rest of the document had been written. Thus in contrast to the uncritical optimism pervading its sections on the colonial revolution, the sections on the advanced countries are mere commentary, lacking in revolutionary analysis and perspective. In fact the SLL resolution treats the American scene and its relationship to the world revolution more fully and more adequately than does the American document itself.

Our central task of creating Marxist parties in all countries of the world is not given proper emphasis in the resolution. Within a general context which gives main weight to objective factors which have already tipped the scales in favor of revolution, it is stated: "Now mighty forces, gathering on a world scale, project the creation of such parties in the very process of revolution." While every effort must be made to create revolutionary parties during a revolutionary uprising, it is also the duty of our movement to explain that this is no simple task. The failure of the European revolution following the victorious Russian Revolution was due to the failure to create effective Marxist parties in the various European countries prior to the development of revolutionary situations. The resolution does not make this point; rather the implication is that in the "new world reality" the "mighty forces" (what forces? the objective tide of revolution?) will create the needed party automatically as the revolution unfolds. This is indeed a serious weakness of the resolution and another expression of an "objectivist" outlook which minimizes the importance of the arduous task of creating the revolutionary vanguard.

It is our opinion that the international resolution of the majority represents a serious departure from the essential views of our movement in the direction of the revisionist

political thinking of the Pabloites. This political move has been taken hesitatingly, ambiguously, and therefore the resolution is eclectic. But the move is nevertheless being taken. The failure of the party to fight politically against Pabloism internationally is now leading to the growth of Pabloite methods of thinking in our own movement.

Cuba, China, and Guinea

Pabloite methods of thought have penetrated different layers of the party in differing degrees and around different political questions. For instance, the entire national leadership of the party was swept up in the Cuban events and lost sight of the basic strategic approach that our movement must take towards such a revolution. The party's whole orientation was towards the governing apparatus in Cuba and its leaders. It was hoped that through its virtually uncritical support to this government, the leadership could be won over wholesale to Trotskyism. A Trotskyist approach to Cuba, however, must begin with the working class, not the governmental apparatus. The Trotskyists should remain politically independent of the Castro government even though they may deem it tactically advisable to enter the single party. The Trotskyists should urge the workers to consciously struggle for democratic control over the governing apparatus rather than expecting the government to hand over such control to them on its own. Our strategic orientation in Cuba, as everywhere, should be based on the workers themselves rather than on other forces which we hope will be transformed into Trotskyists by mass pressure.

Others in the party have begun to carry out the logical implications of this Pabloite approach in other areas, and the results of their efforts should pull up short every party member. For instance, Arne Swabek and John Liang have shown that they see the logic of the majority's position better than does the majority itself: Mao could, like Castro, produce a real workers' state without relying on the workers support in the revolution, without workers democracy, and without, presumably, a Marxist party either. Swabek and Liang proclaimed the Chinese CP to be no longer Stalinist, and if not exactly Trotskyist, something well on the road to that. They declared that the Chinese workers state is not deformed, but genuine; and that the slogan of the political revolution as applied to China must be withdrawn. Here again, on a much more significant scale, workers democracy --workers' control--is regarded as optional and accessory, the role of the working class is undermined, and the revolutionary task is assigned to another, hostile political tendency. Making Mao an honorary Trotskyist does not change the significance of this position.

Frances James, in an article issued during the Cuba discussion, suggests that Guinea is becoming a workers state. In the short time since she wrote this article events have proved how disastrous such impressionism can be. Sekou Toure has imprisoned Communist and other opponents, has suppressed an important teachers' strike, and has launched an attack against "Marxist disruptors." Frances James' line in Guinea or Ghana or Mali would be completely suicidal for our forces there.

These approaches towards Cuba, China and Guinea are but concrete expression of the Pabloite objectivist line. Neither the party leadership on Cuba, nor Swabeck on China, nor James on Guinea, have a revolutionary orientation which starts with the working class and the task of organizing its Trotskyist vanguard.

The Drift from the International

The essential differences in our party and our world movement are brought into focus by one question, the question of the International. As accommodationism makes further inroads into the SWP, the political break with Pablo is more and more seen as easily remediable. Our differences with Pablo, say the majority, are narrowing. This is true, but it is the American majority that has shifted its ground, not the IS. As Pabloism becomes more and more acceptable to the majority, conversely, the SLL with its firm adherence to the Trotskyist position and the principles of the Open Letter, becomes an embarrassment. It is obvious from the published exchange of letters between the SLL and the SWP, from James P. Cannon's "Letters to the Center," from the political critique of the SWP international resolution presented by the SLL within the IC, that our long established and deep-rooted solidarity with the British section has been seriously eroded. That such a situation should be allowed to develop without any discussion whatsoever within the ranks of our party is an intolerable state of affairs.

It was the political inspiration of the SWP with its Open Letter which brought the IC into existence. When we issued the Open Letter we took upon ourselves the responsibility for the split in the International. Yet, as the British have charged and documented, we have been politically neglectful of it since its founding. Now when a most fundamental political conflict breaks out between the party majority and the British section, the majority does everything it can to prevent a political discussion of the serious political questions that have been raised. The majority international resolution was originally prepared as a contribution to the international discussion. The British comrades have presented their opinions of this resolution--now it is the responsibility of the party majority to defend its political line within the world movement. The British have responsibly brought their critique of the SWP resolution to

the International Committee. This Committee, with only one opposing vote, expressed its opposition to the line of the SWP Resolution at its July meeting. Then in December the IC voted in favor of the general line of a revised version of the SLL international resolution.

We fully support the general line of the international resolution of the International Committee of the Fourth International, though we disagree with major aspects of its evaluation of the Cuban Revolution. We are in fundamental political solidarity with the International Committee and its sections throughout the world. It is this resolution and this solidarity which are the principal bases upon which we stand. Where does the majority stand? Why will it not carry out its political responsibility to defend its views within a world organization it did so much to bring into existence?

If the present drift of the SWP continues unchecked it will lead to one of two equally disastrous situations. The SWP majority may carry its political coming together with the Pabloites to its proper conclusion and announce its solidarity with the IS or some faction within it as against the IC. Or, the SWP majority may drift away from any political relationship with the IC or the IS. Thus it would break from its 30 years' tradition of political solidarity and support to the party of the world revolution, the Fourth International. Such a drift away from the world organization of Trotskyism would be a sign that a provincialism which has not been completely absent from the SWP in the past has taken a profound grip on the organization, a grip which cannot but be disastrous for the party's domestic course as well. It was the essentially provincial outlook of the LSSP, its real lack of deep concern or connection with the Fourth International, which has contributed to its present opportunistic domestic course. Such inevitably will be the future of the SWP if it continues to drift away from the Fourth International. A return to real support and political participation in the International is the indispensable first step toward the reaffirmation of a revolutionary world perspective.

Theses on the American Revolution

In 1946 the Socialist Workers Party issued an important document, the "Theses on the American Revolution." This document projected a revolutionary course for the party, and it was the ideas contained in this document--the concept that all tactics, all strategy must be related to the goal of creating the Leninist party that will lead the American Revolution--which kept the party going over the difficult years that lay ahead. By 1952 an important section of the central party cadres had succumbed to the pressures of isolation and prosperity and had lost this revolutionary perspective. Comrade Cannon put forward this

document once again and insisted quite correctly that despite its inaccurate evaluation of the economic perspectives of American capitalism its essentials were still correct and should be the central policy of our party. He called for the re-education of the party cadres around the principles embodied in the "Theses."

The way in which this question arose in 1952-53 is quite instructive for the problems which our party faces today. The Cochranites claimed that the decisions of the Pabloite-dominated Third World Congress brought the "Theses" into question and in fact superseded them. Thus, they saw in the world view of Pabloism the theoretical basis for jettisoning a revolutionary perspective in this country.

At first the party majority attempted to answer this attack on the very fundamentals of the program of our party by affirming support for both the "Theses" and the Third World Congress decisions. Thus, they seemed to hold that the Third World Congress decisions held for the rest of the world while the "Theses" held for the U.S. This was an untenable position politically, for the "Theses" themselves theoretically destroy any concept of "American exceptionalism," making it clear that the laws of world capitalist development hold sway here too. Thus, if the "Theses" apply to the U.S. they must also hold for other advanced capitalist countries, and the same holds for the Third World Congress decisions. This theoretical bind was finally resolved when the party majority decided to carry through a political struggle against Pabloism on a world scale in order to maintain its domestic revolutionary perspective.

Today again we face a situation where a world revolutionary perspective is being challenged--this time by the party majority itself. It is our strong conviction that the party cannot maintain a revolutionary perspective in this country while at the same time slighting a world revolutionary perspective. This contradiction between a domestic and an international perspective will in time be resolved. For the sake of the world revolutionary movement, it must be resolved by projecting the revolutionary orientation of the "Theses" on an international scale rather than by putting the "Theses" on the shelf and allowing an accommodationist spirit to penetrate our work in this country as well.

So far the party maintains its revolutionary perspective for this country. However, there is much confusion in the party as to exactly where we are going, and at times it seems as if the party is drifting from campaign to campaign not fully in command of its own political course. We must at all times realize that we seek to become the vanguard of the American working class. This means that all our work must be related to the

central task of developing roots in the trade union movement and in the Negro movement. This is not simply a matter of winning recruits here or there; rather it is the development of the cadre itself as leaders of the working class in its struggle against the capitalist class and against its own false leaders.

Some in the party attempt to counterpose hollow "party building" to this essential task of building the party by developing its roots in the class. These people tended to view our regroupment or Cuba defense work as a substitute for rather than as an auxiliary to our central tasks. We do not claim that these tendencies to drift from a revolutionary perspective in this country have become dominant in the party. But we do feel strongly that complacency about our party and its perspectives would be very harmful at this time.

Where We Stand

In sum, we believe that the failure of the SWP leadership to apply and develop the theory and method of Marxism has resulted in a dangerous drift from a revolutionary world perspective. The adoption in practice of the empiricist and objectivist approach of the Pabloites, the minimization of the critical importance of the creation of a new Marxist proletarian leadership in all countries, the consistent underplaying of the counter-revolutionary role and potential of Stalinism, the powerful tendencies toward accommodation to non-proletarian leaderships particularly in the colonial revolution -- these pose, if not countered, a serious threat to the future development of the SWP itself.

What do we counterpose to this drift?

(1) We look to the working class and only the working class as the revolutionary force in modern society.

(2) We consider the creation of revolutionary Marxist parties, that is, Trotskyist parties, as essential to the victory of socialism in every country of the world.

(3) We call for the reviving of the traditional Trotskyist emphasis on workers democracy as an essential part of our program and propaganda.

(4) We hold that Stalinism is counter-revolutionary in essence, that it is the deadly enemy of revolution, that it still remains the major threat within the working-class camp to the success of the world revolution.

(5) For these reasons we call for full support to the general line of the International Resolution of the International Committee of the Fourth International.

(6) We call for a political struggle against Pabloism internationally and Pabloite ideas and methodology within our own ranks, recognizing in Pabloism a centrist disease which counsels liquidationism to our world cadres.

(7) We favor the reunification of the Fourth International on the political basis of a reaffirmation of the fundamentals of Trotskyism and the application of these fundamentals to the current world situation. We call for support to any step which furthers the international discussion process, for this brings us closer to our goal of a healthy, strengthened international movement capable of expanding into a powerful world force.

(8) We call for a return to true internationalism, in the spirit of which our party was built. We must fully participate in the discussion process now going on within our world movement; we must give full support to the International Committee and its struggle to rebuild our scattered world forces. We must realize that we can build an effective party in the United States only by playing an important political role in the development of our world movement.

(9) We must continue to educate the entire membership in the spirit of the fundamental principles laid down in the "Theses on the American Revolution." We hold that those fundamentals are as valid today as they were in 1946, and they were in 1952. We hold that those fundamentals are internationalist to the core.

(10) Finally, we regard the SWP with the YSA, in the political sense, as the American section of our world party. In our party are to be found the most principled and developed Marxists in our country and the embodiment of the rich experiences of our 30 year battle for Leninism and Trotskyism. In presenting our views to the party on these critical issues we are acting in the most fundamental interests of the party and the world revolutionary movement. This document, taken with the IC International Resolution, expresses the essentials of the political outlook to which our party must return.

We approach our party in the spirit of the "Theses on the American Revolution" which concludes as follows:

"The revolutionary vanguard party, destined to lead this tumultuous revolutionary movement in the U.S., does not have to be created. It already exists, and its name is the SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY. It is the sole legitimate heir and continuator of pioneer American Communism and the revolutionary movements of the American workers from which it sprang. Its nucleus has already taken shape in three decades of unremitting work and struggle against the stream. Its program has been hammered

out in ideological battles and successfully defended against every kind of revisionist assault upon it. The fundamental core of a professional leadership has been assembled and trained in the irreconcilable spirit of the combat party of the revolution.

"The task of the SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY consists simply in this: To remain true to its program and banner; to render it more precise with each new development and apply it correctly in the class struggle; and to expand and grow with the growth of the revolutionary mass movement, always aspiring to lead it to victory in the struggle for political power."

Submitted by:

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*Differences in sociological evaluation aside, I want to indicate support for the general thrust of this statement and of its political conclusions.

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