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WHERE THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE MEMORANDUM
ON THE GAY MOVEMENT GOES WRONG

by Steve Beren, Detroit Branch; Kendall Green, David Keepnews,
John Lauritsen, and David Thorstad, Upper West Side Branch,
New York Local; and Lee Smith, Lower Manhattan Branch, New York Local

Introduction

The National Committee memorandum on the gay liberation movement presents an incorrect approach to and assessment of gay liberation. It includes no discussion of the growth of the gay movement and a misleading evaluation of the current state of the movement. It misjudges the potential of the movement. It contains obscurantist formulations and outright contradictions that paper over political differences and make clarity on this important question impossible. It minimizes the significance of the gay liberation movement and the impact this anticapitalist struggle can have on the course of the radicalization. It is pervaded with a negative tone that in the end reaches a level bordering on intimidation. It proposes no active intervention into the gay liberation struggle at all, nor does it lay any basis for intervention; indeed, it provides no serious guidelines by which branches should relate to gay liberation.

It would be a serious mistake for the convention to accept this memorandum as the basis for the party's relationship to gay liberation. The memorandum must be rejected.

The following is a discussion of where the memorandum goes wrong.

Two Contradictions

It states: "While we reject with contempt all forms of bourgeois prejudices against gay people, including quack psychological 'theories' labelling gays as mentally ill—prejudices echoed by the Stalinists—the party does not and should not take a stand on the nature or value of homosexuality."

Among other things, this statement contains two contradictions.

1) On the one hand, it claims to reject the notion that gays are mentally ill, yet on the other hand it states—and this is its main point—that the party should take no "stand" on the nature of homosexuality. Yet in our society, homosexuality is branded an illness; this is the official position of the American Psychiatric Association and the medical community in general, and it is one of the main "justifications" for the oppression of homosexually oriented persons. According to this view, it is in the nature of homosexuality to be an illness and in the nature of homosexuals to be mentally ill. How can the memorandum seriously propose to leave open the question of the nature of homosexuality and in the same breath claim to reject "with contempt" the idea that it is a mental illness? Obviously, there is some playing with words going on in this statement. This strikes us as a rather unserious way to deal with an issue that lies at the very root of the struggle of the gay liberation movement.

Furthermore, this statement leaves open the possibility that if gays are not mentally ill, they might be some

other kind of aberration. A freak historical phenomenon, possibly. Or perhaps a distortion of the "normal" human sexual drive produced by the transitory conditions of class society.

In other words, it stops short of rejecting the notion that homosexual behavior is inferior to heterosexual behavior. Why? Is it because this question is irrelevant to the discussion? Hardly, since the struggle against the notion is the underlying thrust of the gay liberation movement, and if we are to properly relate to the movement, we will have to have a position on this. Is it because to reject this notion would be to "take a stand" on the nature of homosexuality? If so, then why can such a "stand" not be taken? Particularly in view of the fact that the memorandum has already taken a "stand" on the nature of homosexuality by rejecting the idea that it represents an illness.

Finally, what does the memorandum have in mind with the concept of the "value" of homosexuality? Does this mean that it wishes to suspend judgment on whether homosexuality is "bad" or not (whatever that might mean)? Does it mean that judgment should be suspended on whether homosexuality can be a *positive* factor in the lives of gay people, rather than something to be ashamed of, denied, and suppressed? Does it mean to suggest that in the face of a gay person's assertion that it is better to openly and proudly accept one's homosexuality than to hide and force oneself into a constricting heterosexual mold, revolutionists should stand by silently, or note that we have no opinion?

This is not a matter of taking a stand on personal tastes. Personal tastes have nothing whatever to do with this. What is involved is a recognition of historical and scientific fact, as well as an expression of political solidarity with the central thrust of gay liberation, which is to bring about a society in which exclusive heterosexuality is no longer the norm.

We are not suggesting that what is needed is a vote on the merits of each comrade's sexual orientation or preference. We are not proposing, for instance, that comrades should vote on whether homosexuality is "good" or "bad." What we *are* saying is that it is necessary that the party completely reject the notion that homosexual behavior is inferior to heterosexual behavior; it must forthrightly reject the sickness theory of homosexuality, as well as the other antigay corollaries, such as the Stalinist contention that it is a product of "bourgeois decadence" and the variation that it is a product of class society. Unless it does so, the party will be in no position to intervene effectively in the gay liberation struggle.

2) The second contradiction lies in the fact that while the statement claims to reject—"with contempt"—all forms of bourgeois prejudice against gay people, it goes on only a few paragraphs later (p. 8) to assert that it is difficult

to tell what is prejudice and what is not: "Especially concerning homosexuality, little is known, and it is difficult to ascertain what is objectively based and what represents prejudice in what knowledge is available." If it is difficult to recognize prejudice, how can it be rejected "with contempt"—which would imply some measure of certainty in ascertaining the prejudice that is being rejected?

Such a blatant contradiction in the memorandum certainly raises questions as to the seriousness of the National Committee's commitment to rejecting antigay prejudice and the sickness theory. It is difficult to see how one can take a stand in one breath, and in the next exclude any basis for taking a stand, without the entire exercise appearing dishonest. This approach has the effect of trivializing a serious problem.

There are other things wrong with the statement that "it is difficult to ascertain what is objectively based and what represents prejudice in what knowledge is available" about homosexuality.

First, it is not difficult to separate what is "objectively based" from what is not, with regard to homosexuality. The facts have been well established over the decades by scholars and scientists in various disciplines, among them history, anthropology, ethnology, statistical research, zoology, sociology, and psychology. Without familiarity with these investigations, of course, the task is not only difficult, but impossible. However, the information is not especially hard to obtain, and it is not difficult to tell what is objectively based from what is biased rubbish.

Much of this information was covered in last year's literary discussion, and it is widely known in the gay movement and making headway in society as a whole. The facts, as Kinsey noted, show that "the capacity of an individual to respond erotically to any sort of stimulus, whether it is provided by another person of the same or of the opposite sex, is basic in the species." Homosexual activity "has been a significant part of human sexual activity ever since the dawn of history, primarily because it is an expression of capacities that are basic in the human animal."

Second, it is not difficult to ascertain what is prejudice in the available knowledge and attitudes about homosexuality. Homosexuals, for instance, are quite skilled at ascertaining such prejudice. A typical example of it is this statement by one of the most prominent (heterosexual) "authorities" on homosexuality, Dr. Charles Socarides: "The obligatory homosexual is unable to function in the most meaningful relationship in life: the male-female sexual union and the affective state of love, tenderness, and joy with a partner of the opposite sex." This kind of authoritative prejudice *defines* homosexuals into inferiority, sickness, sin, or whatever the bag of the person doing the defining happens to be. It invariably has its roots in theological superstition, rationalizations for the persecution of homosexuality, the hyperactive imaginations of certain psychiatrists, etc.

To say that it is difficult to ascertain what is prejudice when it comes to homosexuality is preposterous, if not simply reactionary. Is it difficult to ascertain prejudice when it comes to Blacks, or women? The assertion that it *is* in the case of gays is nothing more than an accommodation to the prejudices of persons who might subscribe to the idea. To attempt to use such an accommodation to prejudice as an argument for not forthrightly rejecting

the false notion that homosexuality is, by its very nature, inferior to heterosexuality, amounts, at best, to nothing more than a sleight of hand. At worst, it is a capitulation to bourgeois prejudice.

This assertion opens the door to an atmosphere in which open expressions of antigay prejudice could be tolerated in the party. We wonder what the effect of this would be on our ability to recruit and hold homosexual socialists.

Is Gay Liberation Political?

In proposing to show why the party should "not take a stand" on the question it has just taken a stand on, the memorandum parades a catalog of truisms about the aim of a revolutionary party: to "construct a mass revolutionary proletarian political party that will mobilize the working class and its allies. . . ." to the taking of state power; to adopt "political positions that guide its work"; not to take positions on questions that "dilute its nature as a political organization, transform it into an organization advancing one or another scientific or cultural viewpoint, narrow its appeal, and cripple its ability to mobilize the masses on political questions."

It is difficult to read this paragraph, with its repetitive stressing of the fact that the revolutionary party is a political organization, without coming away with the feeling that it intends to suggest that there is something inherently apolitical, cultural, or countercultural about gay liberation. Without ever directly stating so, it manages to imply that the gay liberation struggle, by its very nature, raises issues that the party should avoid, steer clear of, and indeed that these issues pose such a danger for the party that it must go out of its way to make clear that it avoids and steers clear of them. So serious is this danger that to take a position on them would risk narrowing its appeal and crippling its ability to mobilize the masses. Clearly, there is something about gay liberation that is seen as posing a threat to the party's ability to carry out its tasks—a threat that the memorandum warns against in terms one cannot imagine being invoked in regard to any other struggle of the oppressed.

In what does this threat lie? Apparently in the insistence of the gay liberation movement that the exclusive heterosexual norm of society represents a distortion of human sexuality and that homosexuality is not inferior to heterosexuality. It no doubt also lies in the fact that this insistence of the gay liberation movement is being advanced within the revolutionary party by comrades such as ourselves, who regard it as a crucial question, the answer to which will determine the nature of the relationship the party will have toward this struggle of the oppressed. We believe this threat to be imaginary.

Two things about the memorandum's alarmist warning on the threat of gay liberation strike us as odd: 1) It implicitly places a struggle of the oppressed and the revolutionary party in potential conflict with each other; it does this in terms that suggest an inherent antagonism to political questions on the part of those oppressed people; 2) It is profoundly conservative. Under the guise of refraining from "advancing one or another scientific or cultural viewpoint," it is refusing to forthrightly reject the oppressive notion that homosexuality is inferior to heterosexuality. This conservatism reflects a view that homosexual liberation is essentially a personal, not a political matter.

This section of the memorandum, and indeed the memorandum as a whole, only makes sense if the gay liberation movement is viewed as essentially a countercultural movement, with some political overtones. How else can one explain the peculiar notion that the rejection of the myths of inferiority associated with one of the largest oppressed groups in this society entails the risk of actually crippling the ability of the SWP to mobilize the masses on *political* questions? Is the struggle of gay people against their oppression—including society's claim that they are inferior—not a political question? The memorandum implies that when gays assert that they are not inferior, that there is nothing "unnatural," "sick," "queer," or "exotic" about homosexuality, they are simply advancing their own particular cultural viewpoint—a matter of personal taste, but hardly a politically compelling viewpoint. We regard this implication as insulting.

Rather than detract from the political character of the party, a position clearly recognizing homosexuality as not being inferior to heterosexuality is an essential prerequisite for any serious intervention into the gay liberation struggle. It is an elementary necessity if the party is ever to embrace gay liberation. Rather than skirt this question, it must be fully cognizant—and the gay liberation movement is—of the role played by these myths in the oppression of gays. The agnostic approach of the memorandum would make this impossible.

The party must be in a position to approach gays with a serious political analysis of their oppression; this is impossible without a historical-materialist view of the matter and a clear rejection of bourgeois- and Stalinist-inspired notions that homosexuality is inferior to heterosexuality.

This does not require a full-blown theory of sexuality. It requires only that we divest ourselves of our own prejudice and recognize the facts. A refusal to do so would be tantamount to placing a question mark over the validity of the gay liberation struggle.

In one sense, an analogy with the Black liberation struggle could be made here. From time to time, racist "scientists" try to prove that Blacks are naturally inferior to whites. They back up their claims with "objective" studies, etc. Their "theories" have all kinds of political and social implications for a racist society—as in England at the moment, for instance, where there has been a considerable influx of nonwhite immigrants. When Blacks indignantly rebut such slurs on their race, do revolutionists stand aside, rationalizing an agnostic stance with the explanation that to do any more might cripple the party's ability to mobilize the masses on political questions? Of course not.

Why should the sexist claims about the nature of homosexuality be treated any differently? Certainly not because the "evidence" is any more persuasive. What will be crippled by the memorandum's approach will be our ability to recruit gay liberation activists.

By proposing not to take a stand on the nature of homosexuality—that is, by refusing to accept homosexuality as no less "natural" than heterosexuality and to reject firmly the idea that it is inferior to heterosexuality—the memorandum is laying the basis for proposing a mere civil-rights approach to gay liberation—and, as we shall see later on, it is a weak one at that. It is proposing that the role of the revolutionary party is simply to "support"

the civil rights of homosexually oriented persons, not to become directly involved in the struggle for homosexual liberation, to champion it, and to strive to integrate the struggle into the struggle to overthrow capitalism. It views gay liberation as a struggle to win tolerance from a basically heterosexual society, not as a struggle to bring about a full acceptance of homosexual behavior. But the gay liberation struggle involves a struggle not merely for tolerance and civil rights, but for full human rights and the elimination of society's enforced exclusively heterosexual norm. This will necessitate the complete abolition of society as presently constituted.

To be able to relate to this struggle properly requires going beyond a civil-rights approach. By refusing to do so, the memorandum would disarm the party and reduce its relationship to the gay liberation struggle to one essentially of "supporting" from the sidelines. It betrays a grasp of gay liberation that is more reformist than revolutionary.

Scientific Investigation and Knowledge

The whole question of the nature of homosexuality, says the memorandum, is complicated by the fact that "scientific investigation of sexuality" is "in its infancy." This statement appears intended to suggest that what *is* known about homosexuality is so primitive as to be unreliable. It is made not as an expression of caution (which would be understandable) but as an argument for shoving the whole question aside. This approach seems a bit drastic.

In its rush to sweep this matter aside, the memorandum refers to only one "science"—psychology—as an example of the infantile level of knowledge about homosexuality. As a matter of fact, homosexuals consider one of the most injurious of these "sciences" to be psychology, and the related field of psychiatry, which has hardly progressed beyond the level of primitive witch doctors, and has an admittedly lower batting average when it comes to "curing" its patients. But why no mention of other disciplines that have made far more useful, and less speculative, contributions to knowledge about homosexuality?

"Uncovering the historical, anthropological and sociological truth about homosexuality constitutes an essential weapon in the struggle for sexual freedom." This was the conclusion of the article "Homosexuality: Fact versus Myth" in the "gay pride" issue of *The Militant* July 2, 1971. Now, two years later, with the memorandum, the approach that is being proposed is rather different: Rather than planting the party's feet firmly on the ground of scientific and historical truth regarding homosexuality, it proposes an agnostic approach to these questions, and goes so far as to say that truth cannot even be objectively distinguished from prejudice.

"Future Human Sexuality"

Having reduced the question of the "nature of homosexuality" to "a hopeless tangle of opinions, prejudices and personal preferences," the memorandum goes on to observe: "Neither is scientific knowledge advanced enough on this question for us to be able to say what future human sexuality will be like in a classless society."

This is irrelevant to a resolution on gay liberation. Certainly, we all have our own ideas on this subject, but no one is arguing in favor of the party's adopting them.

What *is* relevant, however—and it is conspicuous by its absence from the memorandum — is a rejection of the Stalinist-inspired view that homosexuality is a product of class society that will wither away, so to speak, under a socialist society. The memorandum does not reject this reactionary, unscientific view.

What's Wrong With an Agnostic Stance?

The refusal of the memorandum to take a forthright and correct stand on the nature of homosexuality would seriously hamper the party's ability to relate to gay liberation. The memorandum's approach would place drastic limitations on our propaganda and reduce our position to one of at best supporting from the outside actions by the gay movement that do not "go beyond" our nonposition. It would exclude actively intervening with a Marxist analysis in a whole series of questions and struggles. Here are but a few examples:

- The Cubans officially adopted the view in 1971 that homosexuality is a "social pathology" that should be rooted out and punished. The vicious and reactionary proposals on homosexuality included in the current draft penal code under consideration in Cuba include punishments for "ostentatious homosexuality" and even the death penalty for some homosexuality-related crimes. This draft penal code was proposed to the Central Committee of the Cuban Communist Party by none other than the Stalinist hack, Blas Roca, who is being paraded in the Cuban press as the party authority on the matter.

The Cuban record on homosexuality is already shameful. It includes the policy of the mid-sixties of herding gays into concentration camps. Now they are also being credited with the imaginary role of serving as a transmission belt for imperialist ideology into Cuba. The "social pathology" position was adopted at the height of the campaign against the poet Heberto Padilla.

This record is well-known among American gay activists, and it is justifiably hated. It has quite understandably helped to increase suspiciousness among gays about all socialists.

If the party were to declare itself in no position to reject the view that homosexuality is a "social pathology"—and to explain why it is not—then it would be in no position to criticize the unscientific and harmful policy and practice of the Cuban workers state in this regard. Are the Cubans correct in their efforts to eradicate this "social pathology"? Is homosexuality a "social pathology" in Cuba but not in the United States? If it is not a "social pathology," then what is it? If the party were asked, could it assure gays that following a successful socialist revolution in the United States under the leadership of the Socialist Workers Party a similar treatment and policy would not await them? Or is science too much in its "infancy" for us to be able to take a "stand" on such questions?

We suspect that if the memorandum is adopted, the way this dilemma will be resolved will be by attempting to avoid it altogether.

- In addition to the standard view that homosexuality is a product of "bourgeois decadence," the American Communist Party began last fall to call special attention to certain "social ills" within the party, among them homosexuality, which was branded a "bourgeois influence" within

the party. Why have we not attempted to discredit the Stalinists for these views? Probably because doing so properly would require going beyond the fence-straddling position that is being proposed in the memorandum. At best, we could say that the CP is "echoing bourgeois prejudice." This might strike readers as somewhat superficial, however, since it might not be readily apparent to them how branding homosexuality a product of "bourgeois decadence" echoes "bourgeois prejudice."

We suspect that this problem too would be resolved through avoidance. An opportunity to deal a blow to a deserving opponent would be wasted.

- Some gay groups have demanded the inclusion of an objective, unbiased presentation of homosexuality in sex education courses, including courses for children. The Unitarian Church is already including film strips of both heterosexual and homosexual acts in sex education courses throughout the country for 12-to-14-year-old boys and girls.

Could our comrades participate in struggles for the positive inclusion of homosexuality in such courses? Would we support such struggles? Even if this issue could somehow be avoided for now (which might be difficult), it can be expected to become more urgent after the socialist revolution.

- The Black Muslims and some other Black nationalists subscribe to the idiotic view that homosexuality among Blacks is a product of white society and slavery. There is considerable scientific evidence to refute this notion. What position would we be in to combat it if the memorandum were our guide? Or would we regard this as an issue that was too "peripheral" to take on? Would we still regard it as such if it is used against Black homosexual comrades in an effort to discredit the SWP in the Black community?

- Occasionally in forums and meetings of the women's movement, and elsewhere, the question arises as to the nature of homosexuality. Is it a product of class society, for instance? Presumably, if the memorandum is adopted, our comrades will express no opinion on this matter. While it might be argued that this nonposition would have the advantage of preventing comrades who *do* adhere to this idea from saying so publicly, it would also seem to leave us open to charges that we think homosexuality is an aberration of class society.

- In May, New Hampshire Governor Meldrim Thomson Jr. deplored the recognition of the Gay Students Organization by the University of New Hampshire trustees as "repulsive"; the reason he gave was that he opposed recognizing "those harboring a strange affinity for sexual deviation." He promised to replace the trustees as fast as he could.

On what grounds would we support the right of the gay students to organize and gain campus recognition in this case? Merely on a civil liberties basis, asserting that they have a right to exist whether theirs is a "strange affinity for sexual deviation" or not? Would we simply regard the nature of the students' sexual orientation as irrelevant? Or would we help expose the bigotry of the governor as well? To do so would require going beyond the agnosticism of the memorandum on the nature of homosexuality. If homosexuality is not a "strange affinity for sexual deviation," then what is it?

● One issue the gay movement has been campaigning on is to get the American Psychiatric Association to drop homosexuality from its diagnostic category of illnesses. The memorandum's position rejecting various theories that gays are mentally ill provides an inadequate basis for relating to this essential campaign: (1) the position is contradicted, and therefore negated, by the refusal to take a stand on the "nature" of homosexuality; (2) The fact that some familiarity with the "theories" themselves, some knowledge about the scientific evidence relating to homosexuality, and a commitment to a scientifically and historically correct grasp of this question would be prerequisites to involvement in such a campaign would place it outside the scope of the "support" for gay liberation laid down in the memorandum. Such a campaign, moreover, would probably not even merit serious attention in our press. To give coverage to it might give the erroneous impression that we considered it too important, or, worse yet, that we actually had a position on it. This, too, would be easier to deal with by avoiding it.

● Even a serious propaganda intervention (let alone an intervention into the organized gay movement) would be impossible without a clear position recognizing homosexuality as being in no way inferior to heterosexuality. Feature articles, analytical articles, polemical articles, etc., would tend to disappear (as they have during the past two years) because such articles might tend to suggest that we did not regard the gay struggle as "peripheral," "narrow," or unimportant.

Something for Everybody

Section 3 of the memorandum places the current wave of the gay liberation struggle in its recent historical context. It notes that it was the rise of the gay liberation movement that forced the SWP to "clarify" its position on gay oppression and to "discuss our relationship to this movement." It characterizes the movement as "progressive," and adds that "it helps break down the reactionary morality that helps preserve class society." This struggle, it states, is "in the interests of socialism. . . ."

By and large, the positions put forward in this section are correct. Since so much of the rest of the memorandum is either incorrect, inadequate, or obfuscatory, however, one can only conclude that the memorandum as a whole has been put together with a view toward providing something for everybody. Those comrades who have a high opinion of gay liberation could easily agree with this section, while comrades who do not want the party to get involved in gay liberation can be reassured by the fact that the heart of what the memorandum is proposing lies elsewhere.

The section concludes on a note of ambiguity: "The party identifies with the aims of this struggle and supports it, and this is reflected in the political position the party has adopted and reaffirmed in this report."

The ultimate aim of the gay liberation struggle is not simply to win equal rights for a presently constituted minority of persons defined as gay, but to destroy the exclusive heterosexual norm of capitalist society (as well as of the workers states). It is for the full acceptance of homosexual behavior as being no less valid and not inferior to heterosexual behavior. Does the memorandum mean to put the party on record as identifying with this,

the central aim of gay liberation? If so, would this not contradict its already stated position of not taking a stand on the "nature or value" of homosexuality? And what is the usefulness of reaffirming "support" to the gay liberation struggle so long as the nature of that "support" is never defined as clearly going beyond verbal support?

What 'Relatively Narrow Sector'?

In proposing to "look at the question of priorities" in deciding what attitude to take toward the gay liberation movement, the memorandum says that the movement "directly relates to a relatively narrow sector of the population."

On what is this statement based? Certainly not on scientific evidence— or even common knowledge. Although *exact* numerical precision is impossible (and beside the point in any case), commonly accepted statistics indicate that this is far from a "narrow sector." According to Kinsey, around 10 percent of the adult population of the United States— or some 20,000,000 Americans— are predominantly homosexual, with millions more having significant homosexual experience in their adult lives.

These people are all made into outlaws merely for acting upon their sexual orientation; they face multiple and severe forms of discrimination and oppression— both physical and psychological— in their daily lives.

These millions include persons from all walks of life, and every section of the population— workers, students, women, Blacks, Chicanos, Native Americans, Puerto Ricans, etc.

What is "relatively narrow" about this sector of the population? All evidence shows that neither the numbers, nor the distribution in the population of this sector justifies the assertion that it is "relatively narrow."

Perhaps the memorandum meant to place the stress on the words "directly relates." If so, did it mean to suggest that the appeal of the gay liberation movement "directly relates" only to people who engage in gay sex, and that since this proportion of the population is generally regarded as a minority (however large), therefore the movement "directly relates" to a sector that is "relatively narrow" *in comparison to the majority* of the population, which is not gay? Even such an implication would be false— unless one's definition of "narrow" can be stretched to encompass the many millions of Americans who regularly engage in homosexual acts.

Indeed, what does the memorandum mean by the words "directly relates"? Does the gay liberation movement "directly relate" to the millions of gays in every sector of society, or just to the small percentage that are directly involved in the gay movement today? If the National Committee believes that the gay movement relates only to those that are directly involved in that movement, does it hold the same for the women's liberation movement and the struggles of the oppressed nationalities? If not, why does it not think that the gay movement can mobilize millions of gays in struggles for their rights?

"There are no driving forces that can impel in a mass effort a significant portion of the claimed tens of millions of gays out of the 'closet' and into their full struggle for their rights," wrote Comrade Nat Weinstein in last year's library discussion on gay liberation. (Discussion Bulletin Vol. 30, No. 4, p. 11). Does the National Committee subscribe to this view?

And does the gay liberation movement *indirectly* relate to a "relatively narrow" sector of the population too? Can the aims of the gay liberation movement relate indirectly to persons with a heterosexual orientation? If not, why not? If so, is this not a relevant political consideration in determining the "potential mass" and "social weight" of the gay liberation struggle?

The neglect of the memorandum to discuss these questions, and its failure to present any facts to back up its assertion that the gay movement "directly relates to a relatively narrow sector of the population," render its subsequent analysis of the potential of the gay struggle useless as a guide to assessing the party's proper role in relating this struggle to the struggle for socialism.

The memorandum's characterization of the gay liberation movement and its potential is essentially negative. It asserts that "the gay liberation movement does not have the potential mass of either the women's movement or the movements of the major oppressed nationalities, nor the social weight of these movements, which result both from their mass and the scope of the questions they raise"; that it is "much narrower [than these other movements] in the scope of its demands"; that it is "much more peripheral to the central issues of the class struggle"; and that it is not among "the big questions of the class struggle upon which we should be concentrating." These assertions reflect a false analysis.

The memorandum purports to prove the "peripheral" and "narrow" nature of the gay liberation movement by comparing it to the movements of women and the oppressed nationalities. However, even a quick look reveals the inadequacy of this comparison; while the memorandum discusses how the feminist and nationalist movements have an anticapitalist thrust, it stops short of offering any serious analysis of the gay liberation movement and its thrust.

It does state that the issue raised by the gay liberation movement "is essentially limited to the struggle for the democratic rights of this [relatively narrow] sector." Before commenting further on this observation, let us note its negative slant and tone. The issue of the democratic rights of gays is a "limited" one—limited, in fact, to the struggle of one particular sector of the population (incorrectly defined as "relatively narrow".) This in itself is a misleading way of regarding the gay liberation struggle. First, the gay struggle is not limited merely to fighting for the democratic rights of persons presently defined as gay; it aims ultimately at destroying the anti-homosexual, exclusively heterosexual norm of society that puts a crimp on the freedom of *all* members of society, not just gays. It is not a struggle merely for civil rights, but for full human rights. The issue it ultimately raises is one that is in the interests of all the oppressed, both because its struggle is aimed against the same oppressor—capitalism—and because it points the way to a society of sexual freedom for everyone. Second, even the struggle for the democratic rights of the minority of persons presently defined as gay has potential for reaching out to and involving in action broader layers of the population.

Furthermore, the struggle for gay rights has ramifications that go far beyond the sexual sphere. It directly challenges the official morality that provides the cement holding together class society. Bourgeois morality serves to make people toe the line and plays an important role

in the mechanics of class deception, veiling class relations under the abstract norms of religion, philosophy, etc.

But what does the memorandum mean by saying that the issue is "essentially" limited to "this sector"? Obviously, it implies that it is not *exclusively* limited to this sector. In what way, then, is it not? What other sectors might it also be "limited" to? Such vague and slippery formulations pervade the memorandum. They do nothing to produce clarity.

Democratic Demands

The memorandum notes, correctly, that the gay liberation struggle involves a struggle for democratic demands. However, since this observation is made in the context of an attempt to prove the inferior significance of the gay struggle to that of some other movements, and since no special discussion is made of the nature of these democratic demands, the implication is given—whether intentionally or not—that democratic demands are in themselves somehow inferior to other kinds of demands, because they do not directly call into question the right of the ruling class to rule, or the existence of capitalism. That this is, indeed, the spirit in which this observation is often taken can be seen in the fact that it is not at all unusual to hear supporters of the memorandum tortuously striving to "prove" that they gay liberation struggle is not *really* important by showing that it raises no transitional demands—"only" democratic demands. While to some such an argument may have a reassuringly theoretical ring, in fact it leads only to a serious misappreciation of the living class struggle. We think that Comrade George Novack provided a good refutation of such thinking in his contribution to last year's literary discussion on gay liberation:

"It is one of the tenets of the theory of permanent revolution that demands for democratic and civil rights by large groups of people may be partially conceded but their needs cannot be fundamentally and fully realized under imperialist auspices. The struggle of homosexuals for an end to their victimization is no exception. The removal of certain legal inequities and disabilities will not suffice to give them the dignity they seek. The changes they aspire to bring about not only affront deeply lodged prejudices of bourgeois society and the churches, but call into question auxiliary props of the nuclear family and the marriage code.

"The attacks upon such institutional arrangements of the established order imparts an anticapitalist tendency to the gay struggle, even if many of its participants fail to recognize the underlying social and political implications of their challenges." ("The Party's Orientation Toward Gay Liberation," Discussion Bulletin Vol. 30 No. 8, p. 4)

What, concretely, is it that the gay liberation movement is demanding? It is demanding something very fundamental, something no other movement needs to demand: the right to *exist* at all, the right to *be* gay. The efforts of society to suppress homosexual behavior lead to physical persecution, social discrimination, and mental anguish for tens of millions of people. This has meant a historical legacy of some of the most brutal persecution experienced by any group of human beings, including burning at the stake, physical mutilation, burial alive, and, more recently, gas chambers. The struggle for the

democratic rights of this group of persons whom society is predicated upon eradicating is certainly the kind of struggle that revolutionists should be seriously discussing ways to champion and embrace, rather than seeking arguments that might conceivably be used — and are being used — to justify abstention from that struggle.

'Potential Mass' and 'Social Weight'

The memorandum goes on to state that "the gay liberation movement does not have the potential mass of either the women's movement or the movement of the major oppressed nationalities, nor the social weight of these movements, which result both from their mass and the scope of the questions they raise."

First, on "potential mass." Just what is meant by this concept? Does it mean the total number of persons the movement "directly relates" to at the present time ("gay people")? If so, the statement is obviously false. While there are more women than there are gays, there are more gays in the United States than there are members of any of the "major oppressed nationalities."

Yet in another sense, it could be argued that the *potential* number of gays is far greater than either their own present numbers or the numbers of women, Blacks, Chicanos, or any other group; for already with Kinsey it was shown, for instance, that as many as 50 percent of American males *admitted* that they felt sexual attractions to other males. Since one is not born with an ability to make love only to persons of the opposite sex, and since such high percentages admit to having homosexual impulses even under a society that severely punishes such behavior, it should be obvious that the potential number of persons who will act out their homosexual desires is always greater than the actual number who do at any one time; indeed, that number could potentially encompass everyone. Perhaps by "potential mass" the memorandum meant the numbers that could conceivably be mobilized in action around the demands of the movement. If so, it should have explained why the potential mass of Blacks (who number fewer than gays) would be greater than that of gays. Are gays less mobilizable? Is it because national minorities tend to be concentrated in urban ghettos or particular geographical areas, whereas gays are spread throughout the entire country, throughout all social and occupational strata, etc.? The failure of the memorandum to discuss any of these questions might give the impression that its concept of the "potential mass" of the gay liberation movement is the distillation of considerable analysis. In our opinion, however, in the absence of any analysis the concept raises more questions than it might at first glance seem to answer.

The same can be said of the negative appraisal of the "social weight" of the gay liberation movement. Regardless of the validity of the concept of "social weight," it is a virtually useless criterion for determining the party's approach to the movement. The limitations of this concept can be seen in the superficiality of the way it is applied in the memorandum to the national minorities and the women's movement.

The gist of the "analysis" that follows is that the women's movement and the national minorities have greater "potential mass" and greater "social weight" (and are therefore of greater concern to the revolutionary party) than the gay movement because they raise either "demands

of the working class as a whole," "national-democratic demands" that "cannot be met except through the proletarian revolution," or "class demands." The memorandum, by way of "comparison," then dismisses, without any analysis whatever, the gay movement as being "much narrower in the scope of its demands."

Let us look a bit more closely at these distinctions.

While it is true that the national minorities raise "national-democratic demands" and that these cannot be fully met short of the socialist revolution, the same thing can be said of the democratic demands of the gay liberation movement. In this sense, both movements have an anti-capitalist thrust. In what way is the scope of the demands of the gay movement "much narrower" than that of the national minorities? Certainly the struggle for freedom of sexual expression, which ultimately touches everyone, cannot be said to have a "much narrower" appeal than the struggle for, say, Black control of the Black community.

And if it is true that the national minorities are overwhelmingly proletarian in composition, it is also true of gays.

In what way do the national minorities raise almost from the very beginning "demands of the working class as a whole" that the gay liberation movement does not? Many of the demands of the Black movement are rejected outright and meet with open hostility on the part of white workers, who, for the most part, are racist. That does not lead revolutionists to urge Blacks to adapt their demands or limit their struggle to issues acceptable to the working class as a whole.

Similarly, we believe that the gay liberation movement raises from the very beginning "demands of the working class as a whole." The fact that the prejudice of straight workers probably runs deeper on the question of homosexuality than on any other question in no way changes this.

And how does the women's movement raise "class demands" that are, apparently, foreign to the gay movement? Is the demand for abortion a "class demand"? While abortion certainly benefits working women, it can hardly be said to have class limitations. True, the women's movement naturally raises other demands, such as "equal pay for equal work," that are "class demands." But so does the gay movement. Is not the demand for an end to employment discrimination against gays a "class demand"?

Moreover, aside from the fact that the struggle for homosexual liberation is in and of itself a struggle that is in the interest of the working class and the struggle for freedom for the oppressed in general, struggles by gays have raised specific class issues, benefited the working class, and in some cases been supported by unions. A few examples are: struggles against government or employer snooping into private lives; a suit during the 1950s for the right to send literature through the mails; struggles against arbitrary firing, or firing because of an arrest record; etc. Last spring a California Edison worker was fired after having been arrested near a gay bar in Southern California. He decided to fight it. When his union moved to institute grievance proceedings, the company backed down and rehired him.

In New York, a number of union leaders have recognized gay rights as an issue of relevance to the labor movement, not merely because many of their members

are gay, but because gays suffer intense job-related discrimination. At public hearings on the gay civil rights bill, Intro 475, in October 1971, Victor Gotbaum, president of District Council 37 of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, said that the executive council of his union had voted to endorse the bill because "no individual should have to face discrimination that would interfere with the ability to work."

The social and political "weight" of the gay liberation struggle is that of potentially millions in struggle against capitalist society. Such "weight" is not negligible by any standards.

This section of the memorandum appears to be designed less to provide a theoretical guide to relating to the gay movement than a rationalization for not actively intervening in the gay liberation struggle. This becomes especially clear in the context of the memorandum's assertion that the movement is "much more peripheral" to the "central issues of the class struggle" than either the women's movement or the movements of the oppressed nationalities.

An Argument for Abstention

The discussion of this allegedly "peripheral" relationship of gay liberation to the class struggle (and therefore to the activities of the revolutionary party that intervenes in the class struggle) is, again, not an analysis but merely an assertion on the part of the memorandum. While it should be obvious that homosexuals, organized or not, are not going to play the central role in overthrowing capitalism and establishing socialism, having made such an observation does not bring the party any closer to understand how to relate to the living struggle today. Unless, of course, we are to think that that living struggle is unimportant and unrelated to the long-term goal of overthrowing capitalism. The memorandum straddles the fence on this question: While it stops short of saying that gay liberation is of *no* importance whatever, it makes clear that it regards it as having very little importance—indeed, that it is "much more peripheral" than the other movements we seek to relate to.

Translated, this means that the opportunities within the gay movement for recruiting, isolating opponents, building mass actions, getting out our ideas, etc., are not considered valid arguments for our party's getting actively involved in gay liberation. What matters is only that the movement is considered "peripheral" to our "long-term strategic priorities." This is not an objective evaluation of the possibilities of this movement; it is an argument for abstention. It is an attempt to de-prioritize gay liberation right out of the running.

One question is worth asking here. Is gay liberation "peripheral" to the millions of homosexually oriented persons? Of course not, it is of central importance to them; it is fighting for their right to be free of the terrible oppression they suffer. It represents their struggle to live in dignity.

Is this a relevant consideration? We think so. For characterizing the gay liberation struggle as "peripheral" to our activities holds considerable implications for the party. It will mean, in practice, that we will find it very difficult, if not impossible, to recruit gay activists to the party. If they do not find their struggle for liberation "peripheral," they will be forced to choose between re-

maining in the gay movement and joining the revolutionary movement. This is an unnecessary and incorrect choice for the party to offer potential gay recruits. Instead, we should be offering them a program of struggle and a clear commitment to gay liberation that leave no doubt about our recognition of the validity of the gay struggle in the overall struggle to make a socialist revolution.

Just what does the memorandum mean when it says that gay liberation is "much more peripheral to the central issues of the class struggle"? Is the struggle against sexual oppression and for sexual freedom in this category? Does this statement, in fact, not reflect an adaptation to prevailing backward consciousness on sexual matters? Is the memorandum suggesting that oppressed persons struggling against their sexual oppression should get out of that line of endeavor and into some more "central issue of the class struggle"? If so, what? Or does it mean to imply only that the revolutionary party should stand aside and simply let such people "do their thing" as a sort of sideshow on the periphery of the *real* class struggle?

This approach inevitably leads to an abstract and sterile effort at balancing various oppressions and "weighing" them against one another, and ultimately to a tendency to regard commitment to struggle against an allegedly "peripheral" form of oppression as a sign of personal self-indulgence more than political wisdom. It leads to rigidity rather than flexibility, to an attempt to force the living class struggle (of which the struggle for gay liberation is an integral part) into a preordained schema. Wouldn't a more intelligent approach for revolutionists be to go to the gay liberation struggle with Marxism and a class-struggle method and attempt to bring it to revolutionary consciousness, lead it in a revolutionary direction, and integrate it into the overall struggle to overthrow capitalism?

In addition to stressing that the gay liberation struggle is "peripheral" to the central issues of the class struggle, the memorandum makes the observation that it does not raise "such a central issue of world politics as the struggle against imperialist wars." It is, of course true that gay liberation does not raise the issue of imperialist war, but then that is true of most struggles. But is it true that it raises no central issue of world politics? Probably, for now at least. But this is true of a number of other movements too. Women's liberation, for instance, which, while becoming increasingly important throughout the world as a political issue, still has quite a ways to go before it could pass the memorandum's test. Gay liberation is doubtless behind women's liberation—it got going later, has fewer traditions to fall back on, and has to buck more deeply engrained prejudices, including within the radical movement and even the revolutionary left. But who can deny that it has made considerable, and rapid, progress? And who would be reckless enough to predict that it will not become such an issue? Certainly the causes of homosexual oppression are endemic to enough of the world's societies and cultures for Marxists to see a potential for it to develop into a significant international political issue.

Nevertheless, gay liberation raises issues that call into question major institutions of class society, bourgeois

morality, and the bureaucracies of the workers states. A struggle with such a thrust is not unrelated to the central issues of world politics.

We regard the line of argument used in the memorandum as somewhat arbitrary and misleading when it comes to providing an analysis of the relationship of gay liberation to the class struggle. It should go without saying that gay liberation is different from other struggles. It raises different issues (as well as similar ones). Is this a drawback? It presents both opportunities and difficulties that no other movement presents. And it is important to be aware of these distinctions. But it is also important not to fall into the error of attempting to force gay liberation to fit into preconceived molds, and then use its failure to conform as an argument for not becoming actively involved in it.

The vagueness of the formulations in the memorandum may fool some comrades into thinking that its characterization of gay liberation as "peripheral" is only an objective description or statement of fact. In reality, however, the logic of where it leads can be seen in the Draft Political Resolution (SWP Discussion Bulletin Vol. 31 No. 13, p. 15) In rejecting "workerist" shortcuts to the working class, it defines "workerism" as "the rejection of the various social movements that have developed in the course of the radicalization, discounting them as *peripheral* or as obstacles to the proletarian revolution or workers struggles." (Emphasis added) Presumably this argument could be directed against the memorandum itself for its "discounting" of the gay liberation movement as "peripheral." Should the memorandum's approach to gay liberation be characterized as "workerist"?

The Political Resolution, in its lengthy discussion of the evolution of the radicalization and of the "various movements" that have been a part of it, makes no mention whatever of gay liberation. Either this means that gay liberation is not considered to be a part of the radicalization by the resolution, or it is viewed as a movement that is so "peripheral" that it does not warrant or deserve analysis. How does this differ from the "workerist" approach toward gay liberation? The slighting of gay liberation in the Political Resolution would appear to be a logical outgrowth of the approach taken in the memorandum.

An Unexplained About-Face

This characterization of the gay liberation struggle as "peripheral" is new in the 1973 preconvention discussion. It is, in fact, the polar opposite of the characterization included in Comrade Gus Horowitz's introduction to *Towards An American Socialist Revolution* (p. 15). So great and startling is the contrast that his comments merit being quoted at length:

"Under capitalism, side by side with the exploitation of the working class, there also exist new forms of long-term oppression, the reactionary institutional and ideological remnants of a precapitalist era; the oppression of women and nationalities, religious superstition, the persecution of homosexuals, reactionary social morality, restrictions on civil liberties and human rights are but a few examples. These have become instruments for upholding the present system and cannot be eliminated within its framework.

As a result, the coming American revolution will have to accomplish an entire range of historically overdue democratic tasks, as well as socialist tasks, such as nationalization of industry under working-class control. . . .

". . . these new movements are *not unimportant or peripheral* to the socialist revolution, but *at the center of its advance*. Furthermore, they have all developed independent of the ruling-class institutions, and they are free from domination by the Communist Party and the trade-union bureaucracy. The political thrust of their demands is directed against the ruling class and *in the interests of the great mass of American workers*. So, far from diminishing in importance as the labor movement itself radicalizes, these movements will grow and continue to be *a key part* of the general process leading to a socialist revolution. To think otherwise is to think that the radicalizing layers of the working class will be completely incapable of identifying with feminism, Black nationalism, gay liberation and progressive standards of social morality. If that were the case, there would be no prospect of the working class identifying with the goals of a socialist revolution." (Emphasis added)

Why this about-face on gay liberation? Has the National Committee come across new information in the intervening period of time that justifies it? Certainly it could not lie in the gay movement itself, which is growing, not diminishing. Or was Comrade Horowitz's assessment of gay liberation overly enthusiastic and misguided? Such a radical shift in the assessment of the role of gay liberation in the struggle for socialism as the one embodied in the memorandum needs to be explained.

How to 'Reflect' Something Relatively Unimportant

Having defined gay liberation into very limited potential mass, the outer periphery of the class struggle and world politics, and near weightlessness, the memorandum proceeds to give an idea of how this grasp of gay liberation would be reflected in the activities and propaganda of the party: "Our propaganda, our election campaigns, *The Militant*, our forums, etc., must reflect the relative weight and importance of the gay liberation movement compared to other movements and issues of more central importance." What we should be "concentrating on," it cautions, are the "big questions" of the class struggle, not little ones like movements to fight sexual oppression. Fearful that gay liberation might be reflected too much in the above activities, it warns against placing "equal emphasis upon the struggle of women or Blacks and that of "gay people." What do these cautions really mean?

In practice, they will have an overly conservatizing effect on the way comrades regard gay liberation. They will place in the forefront of the minds of comrades on the editorial staffs of our publications, organizers, executive committees, campaign directors, etc., considerations like "Is this going too far?", "Is this doing too much?", "Is this giving the impression that we do not, in fact, view gay liberation as 'peripheral' and relatively unimportant?", "Can we really afford the time, space, and effort to undertake this or that gay liberation-related project?", etc., etc. They will create an atmosphere in which comrades who press for our movement to take advantage of opportunities in gay liberation will end up being discouraged from do-

ing so.

These cautions put the finishing touches on a process that has been going on for more than two years, during which the party has progressively pulled further and further away from any involvement in gay liberation and from anything more than half-hearted efforts at news coverage in our press.

They suggest that there may have even been too much attention paid to gay liberation in our press, forums, election campaigns, etc. This, however, stands things on their head. In reality, there has not been nearly enough. This can already be seen in the fact that articles on important gay actions, such as gay pride demonstrations, etc., are now no longer even automatically sent into *The Militant*. Since *The Militant* is usually pressed for space, even when such articles are sent in in the future, they can be expected to be boiled down into short blurbs in the "In Brief" column.

Two years ago, for a period of a few months, our press took a different approach toward the developing gay struggle. Rather than applying brakes to a healthy desire on the part of revolutionists to help publicize and advance this new struggle of the oppressed, we encouraged comrades to report on gay events in their areas. We even ran a few feature-length articles on the nature of gay oppression, the nature of homosexuality, etc. Gay liberation was frequently, if not regularly, discussed in *Militant* staff meetings. Special discussions were held on *The Militant* staff about running a feature article for the issue to be sold at the June 1971 gay pride marches. All this was seen not as an overreaction to the gay struggle, but as an absolute minimum of what could be expected from revolutionists who had just discarded their policy banning homosexuals from membership and who were not yet involved in gay liberation.

The brakes were quickly applied, however, and since then it has been downhill for coverage of gay liberation in *The Militant*. *The Militant* sold at this year's gay pride marches had no special article on gay liberation, for instance.

While the memorandum suggests that there is a danger of giving equal emphasis to gay liberation, as compared to other movements, the real danger is the trend toward virtually eliminating gay liberation as an important and valid issue for our press and propaganda. This can be seen, for instance, in comparing the coverage of gay liberation and other struggles during the past two years.

In 1971, there were 33 articles on gay liberation in *The Militant*, and 32 mentions in "In Brief." Women's liberation received 370 articles, Black liberation 180. In 1972, gay liberation had fallen to only 12 articles, whereas women's liberation and Black liberation received more than 200 each. Moreover, since the first part of 1971 there have been no feature articles whatever on gay liberation, no polemical articles defending our party from the dozens of attacks in the gay press (apparently on the principle that to defend the party from such attacks would give the misleading impression that we cared to reach the gays who are misled by them with the truth, or that we considered the gay movement anything but "peripheral"), and no analytical articles — only news stories and a handful of book reviews. Our publishing house still has not published a single piece of literature on gay liberation, despite the fact that the Publications Committee

voted more than two years ago to do so.

The memorandum not only ratifies this trend, but it is proposing a continuation of the status quo: The problem is not one of avoiding placing equal emphasis on gay liberation; the problem is one of reversing a trend toward relating to gay liberation on token levels, or even ignoring it altogether. Supporters of the memorandum who think it may be proposing to actively relate to gay liberation in our propaganda are dreaming with their eyes open.

What About the State of the Gay Movement?

The memorandum goes on to present an astonishingly misleading picture of the state of the gay movement nationally. It is so superficial, and even inaccurate, that it could only have been drafted in a near total absence of familiarity with the gay movement and without any consultation with comrades who have some knowledge of the matter. (For a more accurate and rounded view, see "For an Intervention Into the Gay Liberation Struggle," by Kendall Green and David Thorstad, SWP Discussion Bulletin Vol. 31, No. 15.)

The memorandum has a lot to say about what the gay movement is not, but very little to say about what it is. Even what it does say on these points, however, is misleading.

The central core of its argumentation is that there is no national group or focus of gay liberation, and that this constitutes an argument in favor of our not becoming involved. It states: "The gay liberation movement is at present very diffuse, not organized into any single grouping or action front on a national scale." And: "Since the 1972 party literary discussion on the gay liberation movement, there has been no significant steps toward the formation of a national framework of gay liberation organizations or a national focus of action by gay liberation groups. In fact, the direction seems to be the opposite at this time, with such a national focus or organization less likely."

There are a number of things wrong with this assessment.

1) It is misleading to say that there is no national framework of gay liberation organizations. There is, for example, the National Coalition of Gay Organizations (NCGO), founded in February 1972, and its regional affiliates, as well as groups like the Southern California Council of Gay Student Unions, with chapters on nineteen campuses, most of which meet weekly or biweekly.

Moreover, the gay liberation movement has held various national gatherings. These include conferences in Austin in March 1971, Madison in November 1971, and Chicago in February 1972 (out of which NCGO was formed). The Kent State Gay Liberation Front has issued a call for a national conference in May 1974 to discuss national perspectives for the movement. In addition, gays have begun to organize national caucuses within certain organizations, such as the National Education Association and the American Library Association.

More than 1,200 women from 36 states attended a West Coast Lesbian Conference in Los Angeles in April, where our comrades sold \$1,100 worth of literature.

Furthermore, it is not true to imply that gay organizations do not have a national outlook. In 1971, New York GAA organized two tours of the South and the

Midwest with the specific aim of helping to set up new gay organizations and collaborate with already existing groups. Members of GAA/NY went to Cleveland, Detroit, Columbus, Kalamazoo, Milwaukee, Chicago, Minneapolis, Des Moines, Indianapolis, New Orleans, Baton Rouge, Miami, Gainesville, Tallahassee, Tampa, Nashville, and Washington, D. C. The October 1971 issue of GAA's newsletter, *Gay Activist*, termed these tours "without question, two of the most successful performances to date on behalf of gay liberation."

In 1972, NCGO organized a nationwide effort to bring gays to Miami to demonstrate at the Democratic and Republican party conventions.

The Advocate, a gay newspaper published in Los Angeles, reports on gay movement activities across the country and has a national circulation of around 35,000.

Although there has not been any national campaign organized by any single national grouping, this should not be taken to mean that there has been no gay activity on a national scale. Annual gay pride weeks and Christopher Street Liberation Day marches have spread across the country (and around the world). Last year demonstrations were held in New York, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, Detroit, Atlanta, among other cities. This year's actions included a march of some 15,000 in New York — one of the larger protest actions there in the recent period.

Is the gay movement as diffuse as the memorandum suggests?

2) The memorandum presents the absence of a national organization as a key factor in determining whether or not we should nationally intervene in the gay movement. This is a criterion that is not invoked in the case of other movements in which we intervene. The Draft Political Resolution states, for instance, with regard to the women's movement: "There is no national organization or group of organizations that encompasses and organizes the growing willingness of women to struggle for their rights. Most of the feminist groups are local formations." (p. 11) Yet the resolution proposes continued involvement in women's liberation groups on a national scale and discusses several important struggles in which it recommends that we participate.

Similarly, the Chicano movement has no single consistent national focus and no one national organization to which we allocate our forces. Until relatively recently, with activity around African Liberation Day and the African Liberation Support Committee, the same could be said about the Black liberation movement.

We do not therefore characterize these movements as not being national in scope, nor do we propose relating to them without any national guidelines for doing so. Whatever organizational links or avenues for formal collaboration may or may not exist within them on a national scale, the fact is that each of these movements has a certain dynamic and raises the same basic issues in every state and city where it exists. Why should the gay liberation movement be regarded any differently?

Clearly, the gay liberation movement is not something that has appeared in city after city through sheer coincidence. Whether it be New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Portland, Detroit, Chicago, Cleveland, Phil-

adelphia, Washington, D. C., Minneapolis, Miami Beach, or wherever, it is a movement that voices the demands of gay people for an end to their oppression. Its political tasks, therefore, are national (and international) in scope, and a whole series of strategic and political questions have arisen, and will continue to arise, that are national in character.

We conduct national interventions into the Black movement, the Chicano movement, and the women's liberation movement. This means a number of things. Our political orientation toward these movements, and our political tasks in them, are decided on a national level — by conventions. The work we carry out in them is done under the guidance of the national center. Our press covers and actively intervenes in these movements on a regular basis, carrying news reports on their activities, as well as analytical articles concerning important questions facing them. Our publications programs are geared toward putting out materials useful for intervening in them and bringing Marxism to these layers of the oppressed.

The same kind of approach should be taken toward the gay liberation movement.

3) While enlisting the criterion that there is no central national organization in the gay liberation movement as an argument for not intervening on a national scale is wrong to start with, it appears to be designed to serve less as a statement of fact about the gay movement than as an excuse for proposing no intervention. It clarifies nothing, and serves to divert attention from the real issue, which is how the party, as a national organization, should relate to the gay liberation struggle.

4) The memorandum states that rather than motion toward a national "framework of gay liberation organizations" or a national focus for gay groups, the trend "seems to be the opposite at this time, with such a national focus or organization less likely." "Less likely" than what? Than a year ago? Than two years ago? What is the basis for the assertion that such motion is "less likely"? We know of nothing upon which such a prediction could be based. What evidence is there for it?

This assertion appears to us to be based less on fact than on a desire to lend weight to the subsequent proposal that the party not actively intervene in the movement by making the proposal appear more "realistic." But how can one realistically make a judgment so long as no basis for the assertion is provided?

Despite the fact that the memorandum sees no evolution toward a national organization, it has discerned an evolution of a sector of the gay movement "in an ultraleft and inward-turned direction." This sector, it finds, "became part of the broader ultraleft and commune-oriented youth current. In some areas, this process resulted in the virtual disappearance of any viable organized expression of the gay liberation movement."

Again, just what, concretely, is the basis for this analysis? Is it the evolution and, in many cases, disappearance of the early Gay Liberation Fronts that the memorandum is referring to? If so, it is an exaggeration to state that their orientation toward ultraleftism and counterculturalism has led in many cases to the disappearance of any "viable organized expression of the gay liberation movement." Generally, they have simply disappeared and other groups have taken over.

And while there has been a definite growth, on a national scale, of gay churches, these bodies have drawn their members not from the already existing gay movement so much as from the diehard heterosexual churches. Presumably it is not their particular form of counterculturalism that the memorandum has in mind.

What about areas where the opposite of the process described in the memorandum has occurred? Where ultra-leftist, countercultural gay groups have disappeared and other political-action organizations have filled the vacuum they left, or where counterculturalism and political activism coexist? The memorandum strives to give the impression that New York's GAA is one of the "notable exceptions" to this alleged process. GAA's exceptional status, according to the memorandum, lies in the fact that it "has continued to carry out activities directed against gay oppression." This, however, is a highly distorted and misleading portrait of the gay liberation movement.

Perhaps the authors of the memorandum have information that we do not. If so, we would appreciate it if they would present that information to the party as a whole so that the party could make an informed decision on this question.

Far from disappearing, new groups have continued to spring up all across the country; the current GAA mailing list includes more than 600 groups in the United States. The "notable exception" is not that of gay groups that "continue to carry out activities directed against gay oppression," as the memorandum claims. The "notable exception" is a major city or campus without a functioning gay liberation group fighting gay oppression.

The National Committee has also discerned "somewhat of a dropping off of struggles for the rights of gay people in the past period." This is such a preposterous assertion as to spark incredulity among readers at all familiar with the gay liberation movement. The pages of the gay press have been filled with all kinds of struggles for gay rights during the past two years. If anything, there has been an increase in such struggles. Comrades whose only source of information on this is *The Militant* might at first be inclined to find the memorandum's assertion reasonable. That may be because the real "dropping off" has been in the coverage given to gay liberation struggles by the party press, but this appears to us to have been prompted by internal considerations, not by an attempt to reflect the real state of the gay movement.

Naturally, we are all aware of the fact that there is a general lull in the various movements of the radicalization. If the memorandum had wanted to indicate that this lull has also affected the gay liberation movement, it should have said so. However, if it meant to imply that the gay liberation movement, because of some inherent or special peculiarity, is less active now than before, it should have presented some evidence to back up such an assertion. For our part, we do not believe that evidence to back it up exists.

Our Tasks—According to the Memorandum

Based on its pessimistic and conservative view of the gay liberation movement's potential, its failure to forthrightly reject the notion that homosexuality is inferior to heterosexuality, and its somewhat fictionalized account of the current state of the movement, the memorandum proposes that "we should not attempt to carry out a na-

tional party intervention" or "project a national party campaign on this question at the present time"; that "we should make no reallocation of our forces to generally assign comrades to this movement"; and that "our support to this movement will be mainly in our propaganda in the next period, as it has been." On a local level, it proposes that where gay rights struggles, "such as demonstrations, defense cases, etc., occur, the party should support them."

We disagree with these proposals for a number of reasons, and believe that their adoption would lead, in practice, to virtually no involvement by the party in gay liberation.

1) While we agree that no national party *campaign* should be projected, we think that it is incorrect to suggest that our relationship to the gay liberation movement should be left up to local branches without any national guidelines or guidance. This, essentially, would be to regard the party as a federation of local groups that would do their thing in gay liberation—if they felt like it, and if it did not go beyond the line laid down in the memorandum.

We think that the party nationally must have an orientation of intervening actively in the gay liberation movement, just as, for instance, we have a national orientation toward intervening actively in the women's liberation movement. The fact that the intervention would take the form of different kinds of activities depending on the local area in no way changes the fact that these activities are part of a national intervention in the gay liberation movement. It simply means that we should be flexible in deciding what kinds of activities to concentrate on in local areas.

The counterresolution "For an Intervention Into the Gay Liberation Struggle" provides an analysis of the state of the gay movement, a discussion of the kinds of activities and struggles it has tended to carry out and can be expected to continue to carry out, and a proposal on the kinds of actions that we should be involved in and help build. To take one example: It includes a proposal that our party nationally orient toward "propagandizing in favor of, and building united fronts around law-repeal campaigns on a statewide level, where appropriate." It does not propose to attempt to build such united fronts in states where it is not appropriate or where there is no real sentiment within the gay movement for doing so. This does not mean that we should simply sit back and wait until the gay movement of its own accord sets up such a united front, and then "support" it, "mainly in our propaganda," which would appear to be the approach suggested by the memorandum. No. It means that our comrades should seek out possibilities for building such united fronts, and where good possibilities exist, we should actively help to build them.

We think that building struggles to repeal the laws would be a good thing, and we think that the party should be oriented nationally toward just such kinds of interventions into the gay liberation struggle.

What we do *not* propose is the formation, at this time, of a national group or a national *campaign* around the issue of law repeal. To do so would be artificial, premature, and amount to substituting ourselves for the gay movement.

Not proposing these things, however, does not mean that we should have no national orientation toward build-

ing and intervening in the gay liberation struggle. To the proposal of the memorandum that we "should not attempt to carry out a national intervention" into the gay liberation struggle, we counterpose the approach that we indeed *should* attempt to carry out a national intervention into the gay liberation struggle. The form that intervention will take will vary according to the situation in the various areas in which the party exists. But we propose that the party as a whole, nationally, actively intervene in and help build the gay liberation struggle.

We should, moreover, actively intervene in national conferences of the gay movement with our ideas on how to build the gay movement, and with our press and publications — including publications on gay liberation-related subjects.

Comrades who agree with this approach should support the Thorstad-Green counterresolution.

2) The proposal to make "no reallocation of our forces to generally assign comrades to this movement" will lead to assigning no comrades to actively work in the gay movement. If the memorandum is adopted, it will be taken by the leadership of the party that is elected to carry out the decisions adopted by the convention as an argument against assigning any comrades to gay liberation. This proposal would make any direct intervention or involvement in gay liberation virtually impossible. It would lead to the party being in no way directly involved in building the gay struggle.

3) Limiting our support to our propaganda is an altogether inadequate proposal that is made even more inadequate by stressing that this should be the case in the future "as it has been." Our treatment of gay liberation in our propaganda, as we have seen, has moved toward being nothing more than occasional news articles. The memorandum essentially ratifies this trend and will serve as a brake against doing any more than this. Comrades who may regard this proposal as one for a "propaganda intervention" are reading into the memorandum something that it does not say.

4) This memorandum proposes no intervention into gay liberation. While it may "leave open the possibility" of doing something (not defined), as some of its supporters are fond of stressing, it is sheer sophistry to argue that because it does not specifically propose *not* to do something that therefore it proposes to do it.

At best, what the memorandum proposes is that the party "support" some actions on a local level by running news articles in our press on them. Not allocating forces to the movement would make any active involvement in the actions virtually impossible.

But the fact that the memorandum includes no discussion whatever of any specific struggles and issues in the gay movement suggests that its statement that we should "support" such struggles where they occur is not meant to be taken as a serious admonition. A number of struggles for gay rights have been going on for quite some time, can be expected to continue, and are of considerable significance to gays. There is no need to wait for them to "occur." One such struggle is that in New York City to get the city council to adopt the civil rights bill Intro 475. The nature of this struggle, which has been going on for more than two years, was discussed in the Thor-

stad-Green counterresolution. Just how serious the memorandum is in attempting to orient the party toward "supporting" such local struggles can be seen in the fact that the Intro 475 struggle, which has national, and even international, significance in the gay movement, is not even mentioned in the memorandum. Why? Is it because to have done so might have given the comrades in New York the impression that they in fact *ought* to be involved in fighting for a victory in this struggle? Well, shouldn't they?

Moreover, during the plenum itself, Intro 475 was defeated for the third time in the city council. The defeat sent shock waves and outrage through the New York gay community. Protests were staged, and special strategy meetings held to discuss how to fight back. The reformists in the leadership of the New York movement, however, did not attempt to carry through a real campaign on the issue, and there was no effective alternative leadership that could challenge them. Neither the defeat, nor the Intro 475 struggle in general, was even mentioned by the plenum that nevertheless adopted this proposal that the party "support" local struggles "where they occur."

5) The whole tone and analysis of the memorandum, and the thrust of its proposals, will have the effect of encouraging comrades to look with skepticism upon proposals to do anything with regard to gay liberation. Rather than encourage branch executive committees to seek ways to get involved in building the gay liberation struggle, it will tend to turn them into a kind of watchdog to make sure that comrades don't go beyond the inadequate outlines of the memorandum. Rather than gay liberation becoming an area of intervention with potential and opportunities for us to make gains, it will — having been relegated to "peripheral" status and low priority — tend to become regarded as an area in which party involvement poses actual threats to properly carrying out "the major campaigns being conducted by the party."

6) These proposals will tend to have the effect of demoting gay liberation from being a political issue to a personal question for gay comrades, for they will lead to a dichotomy between commitment to the struggle for gay liberation and commitment to the struggle for socialism. They will result in a kind of political schizophrenia for gay comrades. A better approach would be to actively attempt to relate the struggle for gay liberation to the struggle for socialism.

7) The implementation of these proposals, and the adoption of this memorandum, would make it virtually impossible to recruit gay activists. Gays will tend to view the party's support to gay liberation as verbal; and the sincerity of even the verbal support will seem hollow in the absence of any serious effort to build the gay struggle.

With this memorandum, it would become our responsibility to explain to potential recruits the position that gay liberation is "peripheral" to the "big questions" of the class struggle. Aside from the incorrect formulation of that assertion, the superficiality of the memorandum's analysis will provide comrades with a poor theoretical basis for explaining it. In practice, it will tend to be translated as simply, "Gay liberation is really not so impor-

tant."

While our position in favor of full civil and human rights for gays has won us respect among many gay activists, and continues to differentiate us from many reformist and left-wing opponents, putting forward the position that gay liberation is "peripheral," and using this assertion as an argument against getting actively involved in gay liberation, would have a catastrophic effect on the attitudes of gays toward the party. They would see this as a downgrading of their struggle, and they would be right. Some might even mistakenly decide that the revolutionary party is "peripheral." Such counterposing of the purposes of gay liberation and the party is inherent in the memorandum's approach.

Comrades who support the memorandum must be fully prepared to argue this position to gay activists and contacts of our movement. This will be a difficult, unnecessary, incorrect, thankless, and unfortunate task.

And What About the YSA?

A couple of years ago, it was generally assumed in the YSA that it would become actively involved in gay liberation. When the party began putting on the brakes in 1971, however, the YSA too began pulling back. With some effort, it has managed to keep the lid on while the party worked out its approach toward gay liberation. If the memorandum is adopted, and if the YSA follows the party's "lead" in this regard, it will probably not only be a great disappointment for many YSAers, but it can also be expected to have somewhat of a crippling effect on the YSA's appeal for large numbers of young people.

Dress and Appearance?

Gays and other comrades can be "justifiably suspicious" of the NC's inclusion of a point on "the party attitude concerning dress and appearance of comrades" in a memorandum on the gay liberation movement.

Since, as the memorandum admits, "This question and others related to it go beyond a discussion of the gay liberation movement, raising a more general question . . .," why is a discussion of this "general question" included here?

The explicit justification—that this issue was raised in the literary discussion—is spurious. A whole range of issues and information raised in the literary discussion has been left aside by the memorandum. Why has this issue—which Comrade Betsey Stone correctly labeled a "side issue" in her literary discussion article (Discussion Bulletin Vol. 30, No. 8)—been selected as one worthy of mention by the NC in a discussion of gay liberation?

If the NC believes that there are particular problems resulting from adaptation to ultraleft or countercultural currents in the gay movement, then it should have forthrightly identified these as such and dealt with them. Instead, the memorandum implies that gays in particular project "an exotic image of the party" in their peculiar dress or by engaging in sexual activities at party socials. The approach of the memorandum contrasts starkly with the approach of Comrade Stone when she took up adaptation to countercultural currents in the women's movement. Her report to the March 1971 plenum appears in Internal Information Bulletin No. 2 in 1971.

The relevant sections, on pages 9-14, not only begin with an acknowledgement of the *positive* impact of feminism on women comrades' self-confidence, but they are exceedingly specific and free of the provocative vagueness contained in the April 29, 1973, memorandum. Moreover, the problems she was dealing with were far more widespread and serious than any of which we are aware in connection with the gay liberation movement.

The implication of this section confuses the desire to see the party take a correct stand on prejudiced anti-homosexual "theories" with the alleged demand that the party rank the personal sexual preferences of comrades against each other, and it confuses the political movement for gay liberation with counterculturalism—a confusion running through the whole document.

Furthermore, the implication that gays are freaks who will give the party an "exotic" image, that gays can't control themselves at social functions, and that all-women's activities look dangerously lesbian (sick) to straight (healthy) women serves to intimidate comrades. It flies in the face of the PC's statement in its motion of May 25, 1971, that "No pressure from the party should be placed on any comrade either for or against them openly declaring themselves as gay."

For a Point on the Agenda

The memorandum concludes with the thought that since it is proposing no national campaign in gay liberation, there is "no need" for a separate point on the convention agenda on the question of our relationship to and analysis of gay liberation. We disagree entirely.

First, the question of how the party should relate to gay liberation has not been an unimportant one for the party. Indeed, it has taken around three years to reach the present point where a proposal is being made by a leading body of the party. In the course of those three years, it has become clear that there is considerable disagreement within the party, including within the leadership, as to what approach should be taken. The best way to help clarify the issues would be to schedule a separate point during which the counterpositions embodied in the memorandum and the Thorstad-Green counter-resolution could be defended alongside one another, in front of the party as a whole, and voted on.

Second, this will be the first time that the party ranks will have had an opportunity to vote on a line on gay liberation. We think that they should be given an opportunity to cast their votes from a position of full awareness and understanding of the issues involved. This requires a special point on the agenda.

Third, it is possible that the proposal not to schedule a separate point was made with an understanding that should significant opposition to the memorandum develop during the course of the preconvention period the proposal could be revised. We hope so. We believe that such opposition has arisen and that there is enough support for the Thorstad-Green resolution within the party to warrant a separate point for discussion.

Fourth, we fear that no scheduling a separate point might give the impression that the matter was being swept under the rug. Such an impression would be harmful to the party. We would like to see it avoided.

What Are the Major Differences?

What are the main points on which we disagree with the memorandum, and to which the resolution "For an Intervention Into the Gay Liberation Struggle" by David Thorstad and Kendall Green is being counterposed?

1) The memorandum is, in many places, vague, inaccurate, and open to different interpretations—including completely opposite interpretations. As a result, it has the effect of papering over and obscuring political differences, not clarifying them. This is the explanation for the fact that it has attracted support from comrades with sharply conflicting assessments of the nature of gay oppression, whether gay liberation can be achieved within the framework of capitalism, the nature of the party's relationship to the gay liberation struggle, and even the key question of whether the party should be involved in gay liberation at all. A document open to such widely differing and contradictory interpretations hardly constitutes a serious basis for deciding the important question before the party regarding gay liberation.

2) The memorandum does not clearly and forthrightly reject the idea that homosexuality is inferior to heterosexuality—that it is a psychological, physiological, or historical aberration. While it rejects the notion that gays should be labelled as mentally ill, it leaves open the door to arguments that homosexuality may be the product of other kinds of disturbances or of class society. Its claim to reject prejudice is nullified by its own assertion that in matters of homosexuality it cannot determine what is prejudice and what is not. Its claim to reject the idea that gays are mentally ill conflicts with its subsequent insistence that the party not "take a stand" on the nature of homosexuality.

Nothing short of a clear and forthright recognition that homosexuality is not inferior to heterosexuality will do. Anything less would be to place a question mark over our commitment to achieving full human rights—as well as civil rights—for homosexually oriented persons and to the underlying thrust of the gay liberation struggle against society's exclusive heterosexual norm.

3) The memorandum's discussion of what it refers to as the "social weight" and "potential mass" of the gay liberation struggle is superficial and misleading, and its characterization of that struggle as "much more peripheral" to the class struggle is recklessly overstated and useless in attempting to orient the party toward properly relating to a new struggle of the oppressed. It puts forward these concepts without ever seriously attempting to define or explain them in relation to the gay liberation struggle, and it does so in terms so heavily laden with negativism and caution that the only conclusion one can draw is that it regards the gay liberation struggle as unimportant. Its arguments clearly lead away from involvement in gay liberation, rather than toward it.

4) It takes civil-rights approach to gay liberation—supporting the rights of, and opposing discrimination against, gay people—but stops short of commitment to the underlying thrust of the gay liberation struggle, which is to win the full acceptance of homosexual behavior by society and the destruction of society's exclusive heterosexual norm.

5) Its proposal to "make no reallocation of our forces to generally assign comrades to this movement" is a clear rejection of the idea that our party should actively inter-

vene in and help build the gay liberation struggle. It is a proposal to reduce our "support" to gay liberation to "supporting" from the sidelines. We believe that the exact opposite must be done: The party should assign comrades to this movement to help build it and orient it along the lines suggested in the Thorstad-Green document. It should be clear that these assignments are part of a general, national orientation toward involvement in gay liberation, not as something left up to the whims of individual branches.

The Thorstad-Green document proposes, and lays a basis for, an active intervention into the gay liberation movement. The NC memorandum does neither.

6) The memorandum appears to have a fixation on counterculturalism, thereby giving the impression that it regards the struggle against homosexual oppression and for gay liberation as inherently tending in an apolitical and countercultural direction. While no basis for such a view is provided in the memorandum—and indeed the idea is utterly without foundation—the pervading concern of the memorandum with counterculturalism represents a distortion of the true nature of the gay liberation struggle, and even a downgrading of that struggle.

7) The section dealing with "dress and decorum" of comrades has no place in a resolution on gay liberation. Its inclusion does two things: It suggests that this is a "gay problem," not a matter of general applicability to all comrades; and it trivializes what is ostensibly a political discussion on how the party should relate to gay liberation.

The whole tone of this section, moreover, is menacing and even intimidating.

8) We believe that the most serious and desirable way to resolve the issues raised by the memorandum and the Thorstad-Green resolution would be to set aside a separate point on the convention agenda for a full discussion and vote on the counterposed lines of the two documents.

Conclusion

We need an aggressive orientation toward the gay liberation struggle, based on a full appreciation and correct analysis of gay oppression and of the movement. Such a basis is laid, we believe, in the counterresolution "For an Intervention Into the Gay Liberation Struggle" by David Thorstad and Kendall Green. By correctly appraising the importance and potential of the gay struggle, we stand to make gains in building the party itself.

As in other movements, we should educate and agitate within the gay movement for a strategy of mass action and independence from the institutions and parties of the capitalist system. This is the kind of strategy that will build the movement and win victories. We should argue for this perspective among gay activists and within the pages of our press.

In putting forward such a perspective on a consistent basis, we will win real respect for our party. Our revolutionary approach—including the living example of how socialists seriously and consistently work to build the movement and advance the struggle—will enable us to recruit serious gay activists, isolate and discredit our opponents, and write a new chapter in the history of the Marxist movement's championing of the struggles of the oppressed.

July 18, 1973

POSITION PAPER ON THE CURRENT DISPUTE IN THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

Prepared on behalf of the adherents of the June 10 "Declaration of Support to the International Majority Tendency."

by Ralph Levit and Celia Stodola, Oakland-Berkeley Branch; Ron Warren and Judi Shayne, Los Angeles Branch; Jeff Beneke and Garth Chojnowski, San Francisco Branch

1. INTRODUCTION

This contribution represents the viewpoint of the authors and adherents of the "Declaration of Support to the International Majority Tendency," which was submitted to the Political Committee of the Socialist Workers Party for publication in the internal bulletin on June 10, 1973. This document contains some of our views and analysis of the political dispute currently dividing the World Trotskyist Movement, and in particular it attempts to show that the major political errors of the so-called "Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency" (the International Minority) are integral to the internal political evolution and practice of the present leadership of the Socialist Workers Party.

The December 3, 1972 statement of 19 IEC Members is essentially correct in the way it poses the contended issues. The question of the strategic orientation for Latin America, while occupying an important place in the discussion, is by no means the sole or major difference. The most decisive issues in the schism include: 1) the nature of the Transitional Program and the application of its method; 2) the primacy of a proletarian orientation, especially in the advanced capitalist countries; 3) the Leninist party's attitude toward the dialectical interrelationship of armed struggle and the revolutionary process; 4) the importance of initiatives in action and reaching vanguard elements with overtly revolutionary propaganda; 5) the Leninist use of elections as a revolutionary weapon; 6) the goal of a democratic-centralist Fourth International, as opposed to the SWP leadership's federationist conception; 7) the correct application of the theory of Permanent Revolution to the National Liberation struggles.

The Fourth International as a whole, and especially the European sections, have experienced significant growth and development in the period since May, 1968. This growth flows from several factors, as indicated in the document "The Building of Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe": the intensification of the political and economic crisis of world imperialism; the general ascendancy in the frequency and potency of class conflicts; and the inability of the Stalinist and Social Democratic labor leaderships to maintain total control over the proletarian and leftwing movements.

Thus there has evolved a situation where developing Trotskyist sections have been forced to engage in empirical tests of their abilities—to play a role in the living class struggle in order to establish the revolutionary pole *within* the working class movement. On the whole the European comrades are passing these tests and are drawing the correct conclusions from their experiences. This correct orientation and understanding of the International Majority Tendency is most graphically illustrated by the

French Trotskyists, who have established themselves as a serious political element on the workers left.

In contradistinction to this, the Socialist Workers Party—once the strongest Trotskyist grouping in the World Movement—has had a different evolution. In isolation from the workers movement for two decades, the Socialist Workers Party leadership has undergone an adaptation to non-proletarian forces in a material and ideological sense. This rightward motion is most concretely expressed in the following ways: 1) The SWP leadership's refusal to participate in the Women's Liberation movement and in National Liberation struggles as revolutionary Marxists forwarding a socialist program—instead the party leadership adapts to the petty bourgeois outlook of nationalism and feminism; 2) the SWP leadership's advocacy of a minimalist program with which it intervenes in struggles, limiting the public action program to simply "Out Now," "Legalize Abortion," and "Community Control" demands; 3) the refusal of the SWP leadership to orient toward or seriously prepare for an intervention in the working class.

The SWP leadership in recent years has taken only a minor interest in the building of an authoritative international organization and leadership team. This is evidenced by its refusal to provide financial resources and cadres for the world movement, as well as its conscious undermining of the authority of the Fourth International by refusing to carry the International's political line in its public press and statements of spokespersons. However, the consolidation of the European Trotskyists since May, 1968, as a revolutionary political force with a serious working class orientation, out to take initiatives in action and in struggle, has forced the SWP leadership into a different position. The goal of the SWP leadership's current international fight is to gain full control or complete political autonomy within the world movement. This is revealed by the unprincipled and combinationist character of the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency which is largely a coalition around abstract appeals for democracy and "orthodoxy" to which everyone from the Healyites to the centrist Coral could agree. This combination is composed of fraternally the SWP and the LSA with their pettybourgeois and minimalist perspective; and Moreno, one-time guerrilla-warfare zealot with Maoist deviations, and now an exponent of reformist electoral strategy in Argentina. Unfortunately associated with this amalgam are two other comrades: Hugo Blanco, who has demonstrated the ability to enter the mass movement and develop it to the point of armed struggle in defense of the interests of workers and poor peasants; and comrade Peng, whose "Return to the Road of Trotskyism" argues the case for an orientation to the working class in advanced countries and constitutes a stinging indictment of the SWP's *Worldwide Youth*

Radicalization document.

Based on the past records of the latter two comrades, we find it hard to believe that they actually agree with the SWP leadership's view that "consistent nationalism leads to socialism"; or that they think that the fight for Women's Liberation is truly forwarded by restricting agitation to the slogan "Repeal All Abortion Laws"; or that an inter-continental-wide student strategy is the road to communism; or that the French Trotskyists departed from the Leninist conception of armed struggle (the combination of legal and illegal activity) when it helped organize and engaged in anti-fascist activity. If the historical records of these two comrades still hold, we think that this Leninist-Trotskyist bloc has been assembled more on the basis of disagreement than agreement—more by what political questions are left out than by those that are included. The *raison d'être* for this International Minority is opposition to the International Majority's line on Latin America, and the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency counterposes a strategy of party-building which either ignores or somehow excludes preparation for armed conflict and dual power.

However, the division in the World Movement are much broader and more general than the question of strategy for our comrades in Latin America. This is affirmed by the SWP-led Minority's rejection of the document "The Building of Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe." The Latin American issue has been chosen as a factional axe by the SWP leadership because it offered the possibility of uniting the greatest number of elements in opposition to the international leadership—and not because of its political centrality or importance. Nevertheless, we feel that any limited success made by the SWP in assembling this combination is due to incorrect formulations and errors in the line and work of the Fourth International in Latin America; but at the same time we insist that the contributions of Hansen/Moreno/Camejo and the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency has in no way aided the process of self-correction taking place within the Fourth International on this question. Their rightwing position poses no serious alternative for revolutionists. Despite errors we believe were, and are now, extant, we feel that the correct line can best be achieved within the context of support to the International Majority Tendency.

Most of the authors of this document originally supported the Declaration of Tendency submitted by SWP comrades Massey, Shaffer and Smith, to the Political Committee of the SWP on January 19, 1973. Since that time new documents and further information have demonstrated to us that there has been a process of convergence of views between the International Majority Tendency and ourselves on the question of Latin America. On the one hand, we believe that the International Majority—due to the quality and critical-mindedness of their cadres—has been engaged in correcting errors and clarifying positions which we previously believed were incorrect. On the other hand, we ourselves have come to see the importance in this international dispute of fighting against the SWP leadership's false views on the necessity of technical preparations for the defense of the revolutionary party, its press, propaganda, agitational work, the comrades themselves, etc. This issue takes on a particular importance when dealing in underground situations. The party must both politically explain the necessity of arming the working class, of

worker's defense guards and militias, and—in accordance with the Transitional Program—the party must also take the initiative in organization of such activities.

The SWP leadership is out to install itself as the leadership of the world movement or achieve its own autonomy within the world movement by any means necessary; and they have chosen the issues of democracy and party-building in the abstract as their vehicles. Success on the part of this combination can only mean disaster for World Trotskyism. The revolutionary alternative lies in the International Majority which, centered in Europe, has turned toward open mass work, focused on the proletariat, and who today stand as the authentic representatives of revolutionary marxism.

To the SWP's minimalist call for "Self-determination for Bangla Desh," the International Majority has countered, "For a Socialist Indian Sub-Continent."

To the SWP's call for a "Democratic Secular Palestine," they proclaim, "For a Socialist Federation in the Middle East."

To the SWP's "Legalize Abortion," the International Majority comrades have raised, "Free Abortion and Contraception on Demand."

To the SWP's permanent and exclusive orientation to the students and pettybourgeois milieus, the European left wing counterposes, "To the Working Class."

We stand unequivocally with the comrades of the International Majority Tendency, despite certain disagreements expressed in this discussion contribution; and we are in decisive opposition to the right-wing, tail-endest and opportunist current of the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency, which has the complete fraternal support of the leadership of the Socialist Workers Party.

II. LATIN AMERICA

A. General

Any analysis of the Latin American political situation must begin with recognition that the massive penetration of foreign capital has failed to introduce stability; on the contrary, it has sharpened the social contradictions. The result is a generalized and chronic instability which periodically erupts into social crises and revolutionary upheavals of a very intense nature. It is therefore not surprising that the political forms which have developed in this situation have not been prolonged periods of classical bourgeois democracy, but rather military dictatorships and, in periods of intensive social crises, Bonapartist crises regimes.

Thus we can state unequivocally that the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency has thrown itself into the Latin American debate with a grave misconception of the characterization of the ruling juntas or dictatorships. The political history of Latin America has been characterized by military dictatorships divided politically by military factions more often than by political parties, giving a crucial importance to the army itself. It is to this question, in the context of building revolutionary parties, that the International Majority Tendency addresses itself and on which Germain's document, "In Defense of Leninism, In Defense of the Fourth International," is based. It is our opinion that by starting from the premise that the main danger in Latin America is adaptation to ultraleftism and guerrilla-ism, the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency is in the pro-

cess of running away from the question of armed struggle as an integral component of the revolutionary process. The Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency has adopted a legalistic perspective in Latin America, elevating legal activity to the sole strategical practice—much the same way that one of the Tendency's components, the Socialist Workers Party, has adapted to electoralism, giving it an independence from the struggles and life of the American working class.

The real question before the International then, is not the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency's abstract counter-position of party-building to an alleged guerrilla-ism. Both international tendencies agree that there is a *world crisis* of leadership of the proletariat; both agree that building effective revolutionary organizations is the task ahead. But the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency's conception of how to build parties boils down to the construction of simply organizational tools. On the other hand, the International Majority Tendency bases itself on a correct analysis of the period and sees the need to build combat organizations that can *lead* the masses in struggle.

B. Argentina

Comrade Sakai, of the Japanese section, put his finger on the central problem of the Argentinian revolution: how to help the masses overcome illusions in Peronism. As he says, "This is primarily a *political* task"—that of convincing the workers of the superiority of the Marxist line, the class line over the class collaborationist line of the Peronists. The adventurist activities of the PRT/ERP are not at all helpful towards this end unless their goal is to prove that the "Trotskyists" are more daring and successful than the Peronist guerrillas.

What is required is the utilization of revolutionary transitional demands and concepts at all levels: propaganda, agitation and action. Not the least important of these is the advocacy and *organization*, where possible, of Workers Defense Guards to protect strikers and demonstrators against company guards, police and the army. This is a *class* military line, linking and subordinating the armed detachments to the workers' mass organizations and leading toward a Worker's Militia and dual power. It is a line which will attract the most militant workers and students.

The ERP, although intervening from the outside as an autonomous "Peoples' Army," at least recognizes that it is not sufficient to wait for a spontaneous armed uprising to take place in the heat of battle, but that it is necessary to educate the workers in action on the necessity of preparing for armed action. We get no sense of this at all from the PST or the document "Argentina and Bolivia—The Balance Sheet". We get only the importance of legal, mass work and electoral activity with a distinctly reformist flavor. Although the authors of the "Balance Sheet" argues that Argentina was in a prerevolutionary situation and has even experienced a number of "semi-insurrections," there is no indication that the PST has been preparing seriously for revolution. Its conduct would seem to fit precisely the traditional definition of centrism: revolutionary in words, reformist in practice. Recent statements such as the following from the editorial in the May 23 issue of the PST's *Avanzada Socialista* (reprinted in the *World Outlook* supplement of the June 29, 1973 issue of

the *Militant*) only confirm our worst fears: "We think that in order to extend democratic freedoms changes must be made in the constitution and sanctioned by the sovereign will of the people, that the constitution must be made into an adequate framework for the period of transition to socialism. Calling for a constituent assembly is, therefore, one of the most urgent tasks of the new government.

" . . . Political instability, social tensions, struggle, and violence are the results of the economic system we live under. Therefore, we cannot agree to any truce with the Sociedad Rural (the big landowners organization), the CGE (General Business Federation), the Union Industrial Argentina (Argentine Manufacturer's Association), or the monopolies, unless they stop exploiting the workers and the country. Hence our position and our advice to the workers must be brief and to the point: Don't let down your guard while the oligarchy and imperialism are still intact. And this means fighting for the profound structural changes that alone can bring peace to the society."

These are hardly formulations worthy of revolutionary Trotskyists!

It is significant that the only reference by the Leninist-Trotskyist Minority to the military support by the ERP to workers strikes and mass actions is a mention of a single incident, in which the ERP disarmed company guards. Even more interesting is the absence of any comment whatever about this side of the ERP's activity. Is the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency merely opposed to the autonomous character of these detachments or is it opposed to armed defense units of any kind? Not a word! What is clear is that the PST has abstained entirely from this kind of activity—activity which is the hallmark of a revolutionary party. Trotsky spelled it out explicitly in the Transitional Program: "Strike pickets are the basic nuclei of the proletarian army. This is our point of departure. In connection with every strike and street demonstration, it is imperative to propagate the necessity of creating workers groups for self defense. It is to write this slogan into the program of the revolutionary wing of the trade unions. It is imperative wherever possible, beginning with the youth groups, to organize groups for self defense, to drill and acquaint them with the use of arms. It is necessary to advance the slogan of a Workers Militia as the one serious guarantee for the inviolability of workers' organizations, meetings and press. The arming of the proletariat is an imperative concomitant element to its struggle for liberation."

What about the use of election campaigns as a tool for educating the masses? If major sections of the working class had been liberated from illusions in the electoral process and were ready for a direct assault on the state, then it would have been an act of betrayal to drag the masses back into the parliamentary trap. However, the results of the election would not seem to bear out such an estimate. It must be acknowledged that under the concrete circumstances it was absolutely correct and necessary for revolutionists to have entered into and participated in the elections, *providing the elections had been used to advance a revolutionary transitional program*. This would include a call for the formation of workers councils, a workers militia and a workers government, while also a denunciation of the capitalist dictatorship and an exposition of its phony elections. In our opinion this was neither the spirit nor the letter of the PST cam-

paign. If it is claimed that the workers were not ready for this program, the PST is guilty of tail-ending. If the real reason is that it did not want to endanger its ballot status, then it is guilty of aggravated opportunism and legalism. The test of a revolutionary party in a prerevolutionary situation, is its capacity to combine legal and illegal work, peaceful and combat actions.

It must unfortunately be acknowledged that Comrade Germain is all too correct when he observes that in Argentina there is a most favorable objective situation and a significant number of self-proclaimed Trotskyists, but not a genuine Leninist-Trotskyist current. The ERP/PRT, no matter how admirable, is not Trotskyist either in theory or practice. It is more a petty bourgeois, pragmatic, substitutionalist action group of the Tupamaros variety, than a Leninist organization. We do not see how the Fourth International can continue to take responsibility for either its words or deeds. The PST, on the other hand, while probably more adept and skillful in its tactical intervention into the mass movement, and an organization which may well grow, appears to lack the revolutionary combativity and audacity, the willingness to advance the struggle beyond the legal channels which is the essence of a revolutionary party.

Finally it must be observed that the proprietary interest the SWP leadership has taken in the PST provides another clue as to the character of the latter—for the SWP, which we know intimately, shows precisely the same tendencies; extreme timidity and abstention when faced with the slightest possibility of a confrontation (pacifism); an inordinate emphasis on peaceful, legal and orderly actions and on election campaigns, which are all conducted in a reformist spirit while tail-ending and opportunistically adapting ideologically to petty bourgeois outlooks such as nationalism and feminism.

The electoral victory of Peronism does not end the social crises, but opens an entirely new and higher phase. While it was a victory of a bourgeois party, the masses conceive of it as a great victory for themselves. Indeed, it takes on the appearance of a pseudorevolution. On the day of Campora's inauguration one half-million people massed in the streets of Buenos Aires. They came to celebrate the "victory" but also to serve notice that they were not going to sit back and wait for Campora to make the "peaceful revolution." They surrounded the prisons and demanded the immediate release of the political prisoners. The mood was further underscored by the events that occurred in conjunction with Peron's return. The masses expect and demand what the regime cannot give. The process of disillusionment is inevitable. Unfortunately, no genuine Trotskyist tendency exists at present in Argentina. Hopefully one will emerge from among the several pseudo-Trotskyist groups.

C. Bolivia

The POR-Gonzales is obviously not to be compared with the ERP/PRT. The POR cadres are composed of serious, tested worker militants with historic roots in the Bolivian proletariat. The World Trotskyist Movement has no cause for embarrassment or apologies over its record in the recent upheavals. Can the POR be blamed for the defeat of August 1971 as the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency implies? We don't think so—any more than the Bolsheviks could be justifiably blamed for the defeat of 1905, al-

though the Bolsheviks were perhaps guilty of greater errors (such as their initial hostility toward and aloofness from the soviets). The most weighty reason for the victory of the counter-revolution in Bolivia is to be found in the absence of a widespread, generalized peasant uprising—a failure which can hardly be attributed to the POR. It should be remembered that the peasantry comprises the majority of the population in Bolivia, so that any successful confrontation cannot come about without the direct participation of the peasantry. Furthermore, it entered into the climactic events with relatively weak forces as compared with the centrists and reformists.

Whatever errors the POR committed, it manifested no deep-seated tendency toward adventurism (like that of the PRT/ERP) or toward opportunism (like that of the PST). It emerged from the battle unquestionably the only participant with a correct analysis and program—not only in words but in deeds. Its warnings against reliance on Torres, and its call for arming of the masses, was proven absolutely correct; unfortunately this was primarily in the negative sense. But the POR also pointed the way to the positive solution by providing the principle leadership of the only organized armed resistance to the counter-revolution. All this will stand in good stead for the future. Yet the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency, the International Minority, sums up the role of the POR as "disasterous". One can only conclude that this is an inexcusable factional excess.

As to the specific criticisms made by the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency, Comrade Germain has answered them quite convincingly in his document, "In Defense of Leninism, In Defense of the Fourth International," which we support. In particular Germain's conception of the Popular Assembly stands out in stark contradiction to the mechanical identification of the Popular Assembly with soviets that the SWP-led Minority adopts. The essence of soviets is self-mobilization and organization of the masses in the cities, villages, army, etc. On the contrary, the Popular Assembly was an assemblage of bureaucratic leadership super-imposed on the masses, controlling the mass struggle on all levels.

There are two overall questions, however, that need to be considered further. First, did the POR (along with the entire International Majority) "give up the Marxist concept of armed struggle, in favor of Guevara's concept," as charged by the SWP-led Minority? The question is not debatable, as it was answered by history. When the true practitioners of the Guevara-ist line, the ELN, opened a guerrilla front in Teoponte, the POR, far from joining them, turned its face squarely toward the revolutionary mass movement, and advocated precisely the Marxist concept of armed struggle. In its "May Day Appeal" the POR stated:

" . . . the POR calls upon all the workers, on this first day of May, to organize their armed pickets, their proletarian and peasant regiments. In each factory, in every mine, in every peasant community, in the Universities, it is necessary to organize armed detachments, which will be the embryos of the Revolutionary Peoples army. Only in this way shall we definitively crush the fascists in the crisis, which they prepare, while at the same time, we shall assault the positions of the capitalist regime.

Only in that way will the revolution triumph, opening the road to the building of socialism." Although the SWP-led Minority comrades carefully refrain from taking a clear stand on this orthodox Marxist line, we must conclude that they reject it as a form of "Guevara-ist" adventurism. This is the most fundamental issue in the dispute over Latin American policy.

While all this doesn't prove that the POR was flawless, it certainly demonstrates that the comrades did not "give up the Marxist concept of armed struggle in favor of the Guevara-ist concept". Nevertheless, the POR must be criticized for the guerrilla orientation that it did carry out earlier under the Barrientos regime, because: 1) it didn't correspond to the level of the class struggle at that time; and 2) it must have necessarily interfered with the primary and indispensable task of building a base in the masses and augmenting its cadres.

The second question worthy of examination, is the dispute around the possibility of a significant bourgeois democratic phase in most Latin American countries. At least as far as Bolivia is concerned, the position of the POR and the International Majority has been all too fully vindicated. Comrade Germain, warning against illusions that the Torres regime could bring about a "climate, in which the mass movement could organize and broaden, gradually, progressively and legally," has been fully justified by events.

This question is by no means an academic one. The entire future of the Argentine revolution could depend on how the vanguard answers this problem with regard to the Peronist Campora regime. Should the workers of Argentina look forward to a durable, stable, bourgeois democratic parliamentary regime, and to significant concessions that would be indispensable for the survival of such a regime? Should they count on a prolonged period of peaceful, legal organization and preparation? Or should they be told that the Campora government is a Bonapartist crisis regime? Entirely different policies are dictated by the different answers to this question. Guerrilla warfare is clearly an absurdity, no matter how the question is answered. The entire "justification" for it has, at least for a time, vanished (that is, the conditions of total illegality and extreme repression). A golden, though relatively brief opportunity has opened up for building the revolutionary party both through open propaganda and through participation in, and even leadership of mass struggles.

The real question is: should the revolutionary cadres limit their activities to propaganda work for socialism and left wing unionism? Or should they, to the best of their ability, *in addition* prepare the vanguard both politically and militarily for the inevitable showdown? Should their agitation be solely *or even primarily* around issues of wages, hours, and union democracy, while of course advocating "socialism" in the abstract? Or should they *also* tirelessly explain the need for establishing and try to organize factory committees, factory defense guards, a workers' militia, and advocate a workers' government based on a revolutionary transitional program? The two different policies distinguish the centrist from the revolutionary tendency.

We therefore stand firmly with the POR and the International Majority against comrades Moreno, Lorenzo,

and the SWP dominated Minority. We doubt that Comrade Blanco belongs in this company. We suspect that his recognition of serious errors committed by the PRT and certain guerrilla-ist formulations, especially as expressed by Comrade Maitan, led him into an alliance with elements with whom he has far more basic disagreements. We doubt that this unnatural alliance will endure.

D. Some Criticisms

Having said all this, we think it necessary to discuss the errors of the POR and of the International Majority Tendency, frankly and openly. It is a thousand times more important to strive for political clarity and correctness, than to maintain a show of unity out of factional considerations. We leave this kind of questionable politics to the leadership of the SWP's Minority, which stubbornly refuses to utter a word of criticism in regard to the far more fundamental errors committed by their supporters such as Moreno and Lorenzo. These comrades *truly* espoused "Guevara-ist concepts" of armed struggle in 1968, then veered over (not surprisingly) to supporting participation in the class collaborationist "Frente Amplio" in Uruguay; they also proposed to "help" Peron if only he allotted 80% of the candidates to workers and presented a plan of struggle for wage increases and against unemployment! The deviations are equally bad on the part of the leadership of the Canadian supporters of the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency, who defile the banner of Trotskyism by shamelessly painting up the petty bourgeois right wing Social Democratic NDP.

Our criticism turns on the question of the road to power, the character of the armed struggle and the role of guerrilla warfare in Latin America. The resolution of the 9th World Congress on Latin America, and Livio Maitan's December 2, 1972 resolution, "Bolivia—Results and Perspectives," assign a *central role* to guerrilla warfare, and on a continental scale. That guerrilla warfare will occupy an important place in the Latin American revolution is beyond question, especially in connection with the peasant revolts. But to determine in advance that the "specific form of this armed struggle for an entire period could only be guerrilla war" and this of a "continental dimension," is totally unwarranted and is to deny in advance a central role in the revolution to the proletariat, since the working class as a class cannot participate in guerrilla warfare whether in the country or the cities. Guerrilla warfare is necessarily limited to small elite bands in the cities or the mountains, or to peasant armies led by urban revolutionaries as in China or Vietnam. Only a fool would categorically rule out a "Chinese" or "Vietnamese" road for Latin America. We should have learned by now that history knows of too many variants to be programmed with accuracy by theories or prognosis. Still, one cannot go into battle without a plan and a plan must be based on the most probable and desirable course of events, on the rule and not on the exception. The specific course of the Chinese, Vietnamese and Cuban events were not predetermined or predestined. Not the least important element in the determination of events was the absence, or defeat of, the proletarian internationalist forces and (on the other side of the coin) the predominance of petty bourgeois pragmatic revolutionaries. We must add, of course, the unique charac-

ter of the Cuban revolution which will almost certainly prove to be one of a kind, as well as the special circumstances which preceded and led to the rural guerrilla was in China and Southeast Asia—namely colonial and inter-imperialist wars. On the contrary, everything in Latin America since the Cuban revolution points to proletarian-led insurrections and civil wars: Santo Domingo, Bolivia, Argentina.

It is true that if the revolution is defeated in the cities it may retreat to the country and fight its way back. But there is nothing predetermined about this. Of course, if the revolutionary vanguard decided in advance that defeat is inevitable, that will itself contribute to that outcome as a self-fulfilling prophecy. One cannot shape one's policies in advance of great struggles on the assumption of defeat. The forms of struggle forced upon the revolution as a result of failure are entirely different from those directed by a perspective of proletarian insurrections in the cities, supported by peasant uprisings, and this perspective is both the most likely and the most desirable from the point of view of the proletarian communist tendency.

The thesis of protracted guerrilla warfare on a continental scale is based on the assumption that no victorious mass urban-led revolution is possible in any Latin American country since it would be quickly overwhelmed—either by the national army or the army of another Latin American country (such as Brazil), or by the United States. That these possibilities are very real has already been demonstrated. However, it has also been shown that guerrilla warfare is no surefire solution to these problems. Beyond that it is unwarranted and shortsighted to assume that these counterrevolutionary forces will have complete freedom of action at all times.

It is not clear at all whether adventurism or opportunism is the greatest danger in Latin America. The only thing that *is* clear is that they are closely related (Tupamaros, MIR, PRT, Moreno, etc.). In any case, guerrillism, uncontrolled by politics as practiced by the ERP, is a dangerous malady which must be fought openly and vigorously.

It is true that Comrade Germain in his document admits to some incorrect formulations regarding guerrilla warfare in the resolution of the 9th World Congress on Latin America. It is also significant that in spite of these errors, the POR *did* rapidly and fully intervene into the urban mass struggles. Nevertheless it is of the utmost importance that the resolutions which will guide the work of our Latin American comrades point unambiguously in the direction of mass work and away from guerrilla warfare at this time. Consequently we are in opposition to the sections of Livio Maitan's December 2 resolution, "Bolivia—Results and Perspectives," which gives explicit priority to the military side of the activities of the POR-Gonzalez in the next stage. Maitan clearly reaffirms those mistaken formulations in regard to a continental-wide strategy of guerrilla warfare.

The real priority in *all* Latin American countries is the building of cadres by penetrating the workers movement and by active participation in their struggles, by advancing appropriate revolutionary transitional slogans, by educating the advanced elements through word and deed, by advocating and organizing armed workers' detach-

ments—in short, *by preparing the toiling masses for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism*. This is clearly the main thrust of comrade Germain's contribution, "In Defense of Leninism, In Defense of the Fourth International." It remains necessary to eliminate all ambiguities in past documents and resolutions.

III. PERSPECTIVES FOR EUROPE

A. *The Objective Situation*

Our support for the International Majority Tendency over the SWP-led Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency, is predicated not only on the fact that we believe the cadres of the International Majority are closer to the revolutionary Marxist road in theory and practice, but also because we specifically endorse their perspectives for political work on the European continent.

We believe that the International Majority Tendency possesses and employs a more correct understanding of the present historical epoch and context, as the needs of the epoch were explained by Trotsky in the *Transitional Program*:

"The objective prerequisites for the proletarian revolution have not only ripened, they have begun to get somewhat rotten. Without a socialist revolution, in the next historical period at that, a catastrophe threatens the whole culture of mankind. The turn is now to the proletariat: i.e., chiefly to its revolutionary vanguard. The historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of the *revolutionary leadership*." The confirmation of Trotsky's analysis has been through the character of numerous mass upheavals and potentially revolutionary situations that have transpired since those words were written: the failure of most of those uprisings to lead to the seizure of power by the proletariat reveals that the crisis in leadership of the proletariat still remains to be overcome.

We are now faced with the situation that the new rise of working class struggles in capitalist Europe again places the socialist revolution on the agenda in at least several countries in a conjunctural as well as in a long-run structural sense. The draft thesis, "The Building of Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe," speaks directly to the need of solving the historical crisis of proletarian leadership in the context of the 1970's. The authors of this document understand—whereas the leaders of the SWP's tendency do not—that the role of revolutionary Trotskyists is to raise the political consciousness of the masses and not give in to the temptation to adapt to the more backward layers of the struggle by raising only minimalist demands; that revolutionaries must lead and initiate struggles; and that a revolutionary party must be based upon the industrial proletariat—not just in theory, but in the practice of its daily activities and its general outlook and orientation.

The specific objective situation of the 1970's is a new deepening of the crisis of capitalism revealed by the international monetary crisis—the enormously expanded productive capacity and shrinking markets which have reinforced the excess capacity of even the pace-setting industries such as auto, chemical and electrical. Flowing from the current economic crisis which embodies both a profound structural and conjunctural aspect, there has appeared a general social crisis in Europe: strikes combined with other forms of proletarian struggles are on the ascen-

dency. To date the crisis has achieved its zenith in Italy, Great Britain, Spain and France. In this situation—as correctly outlined in the European document—the bourgeoisie itself faces a deep crisis. The slowdown in the economic growth and the intensification of inter-imperialist competition has greatly undercut the ability of the capitalist class to offer serious concessions to the working class. However, the current strength of the workers movement has ruled out—at least for the time being—the imposition of either an openly fascist solution or the institution of additional dictatorships on the Greek model.

These aggravated social contradictions have had an impact on the traditional organizations of the working class, especially the Stalinists and Social Democrats. The general result has been a loss in their credibility and the appearance of trade union militants who have been outflanking their leadership. It should be taken into account that Mary-Alice Waters, in her contribution presumably representing the SWP's Minority Tendency, *offers no significant challenge to this analysis.*

B. The New Vanguard

It is quite terminologically accurate in a political sense to say that out of this European radicalization currently in process, a new mass vanguard has appeared. It arose first of all out of movements for solidarity with the Cuban and Vietnamese revolutions, and in its initial stages was mainly composed of student youth. The evolution of this new vanguard took a decisive turn with the revolutionary crisis of May 1968 in France. This resulted in an extremely progressive re-orientation of this new vanguard toward working class struggles. But even more importantly, the new rise of workers struggles is not only becoming an increasingly decisive factor in the orientation and outlook of the new vanguard, but it is significantly affecting the actual *composition* of the vanguard current as well.

It is important to assert one other point at this juncture, because much of the debate over Europe involves the counterposition of the methods and practice of the Socialist Workers Party leadership and the Communist League. The May 1968 aborted French revolution *also* had a progressive impact on many of the most revolutionary-minded students in the United States. We are especially referring to those layers in and around the New Left at that time and the SDS, many of whom were previously tied to the political views of the late C. Wright Mills and Herbert Marcuse. The refutation of the views of these theoreticians contained in the reality of the French events, resulted in a widespread transformation whereby many of these same United States youth began to show an intensified interest in orthodox Marxism and working class struggle. Unfortunately the SWP leadership came to the incorrect and mistaken conclusion at that time that the *main danger* in our campus and student work was that of "ultraleft workerism." There is no question that workerism has been and can be a danger; but history has shown that the real threat has been the continued appeal of the liberalism of the left wing of the Democratic Party, and even worse, a resurgence in the influence of Stalinism, both in its Communist Party and Maoist variety, which the SWP leadership did not foresee. It is our opinion that many of the most revolutionary-minded and serious student youth were *lost* to Trotskyism because of the SWP

leadership's unjustified over-reaction to what they called "workerism." Furthermore, that error helped pave the way for the current situation where—when Maoism is on the decline in every other advanced capitalist country—it has been revived and is growing in the United States, largely because of the ability of the Maoist organizations to solidarize themselves with and participate in the struggles of the most oppressed of the American masses: Black, Chicano, and women workers, and the industrial proletariat in general. The most serious and militant students have become increasingly conscious of their own lack of social weight and are therefore attracted to the working class and organizations that seem interested in relating to workers struggles. There is no question in our minds that a party that has real weight among the most oppressed workers and in the unions, will carry increased and enhanced political authority on the campuses and in intellectual circles. The Barnes-Sheppard leadership of the SWP advocates the opposite viewpoint.

Returning to Europe, the comrades of the International Majority are correct in their conception that the task of Trotskyist parties is to move from small propaganda groups into revolutionary Trotskyist parties—parties that are *rooted* in the class and therefore capable of challenging the bankrupt misleaders of the proletariat. The comrades of the International Majority Tendency are also correct in understanding that an important step will be winning hegemony in the new mass vanguard. And it is further to the credit of these comrades that they attempt to delineate the limitations of this new vanguard as well: particularly the political problems stemming from petty-bourgeois elements within it. It is quite clear that the document on Europe—in the tradition of Marxism/Leninism and against the outlook of the SWP leadership—gives the *highest priority* to the working class elements of the new vanguard. The traditional Trotskyist understanding of the over-riding necessity of rooting the party in the key sectors of the proletariat, is integral to the document. The comrades state unequivocally: "It is illusory to think that we can absorb these people into our sections in one stroke; individual cases aside, they will only become a social base for revolutionary Marxist organizations to the extent that these organizations demonstrate their political and organizational seriousness. And such seriousness involves in addition to the tasks mentioned above, regular, persistent, long term intervention in the plants and unions regardless of the immediate results and regardless of the ups and downs in the class struggle."

C. The International Minority Offers No Alternative

The viewpoint of the SWP's tendency on the European question has to date been expressed only through the contribution of Mary-Alice Waters. First, comrades will note that in that contribution the focus of the text deals with just about every question under the sun except the real analysis and projections for Europe contained in the International Majority's draft thesis. Mary-Alice Waters quotes from articles in past issues of *Red Mole*, offers fragments of statements made by various individuals in 1969, reprints sections of articles from the Communist League's internal discussion bulletin (which were rejected not only by the League but ultimately by the authors themselves), and at last she seems to conclude that the

real issue is *not* what the comrades on the International Majority have written in their document, *nor* the general line of their work carried out over the past period, *but* instead it is that the European comrades are surreptitiously trying to smuggle their allegedly guerrilla-ist orientation from Latin America to Europe.

However, aside from these charges and assertions which border on the fantastic, the most discrediting aspect of Mary-Alice's contribution is the large quantity of falsifications and distortions in regard to the work of the Barnes-Sheppard leadership of the SWP inside the United States. Here is a case where all comrades can read her assertions and judge the realities for themselves. And we can state confidently that the false impression that her contribution gives in regard to our party's alleged "proletarian orientation" and its alleged attempts to reach the vanguard elements (even among students) will be roundly and soundly answered and refuted in subsequent documents and discussion.

One can summarize the Barnes-Sheppard Tendency's contribution to the European discussion by saying that Mary-Alice has turned the traditional concepts of the Leninist-Trotskyist movement on *their head*: She actually believes that persistent and long term intervention by the revolutionary party in the plants and unions is a *shortcut!* The theoretical basis for this claim lies in the document, *The Worldwide Youth Radicalization*, which maps out an international and intercontinental-wide student strategy and tactics. The SWP's Tendency has counterposed this perspective and orientation to the International Majority on every question from Latin America to Europe and back again. Let us take up the differences around the youth question since this seems to be at the heart of the dispute.

As was pointed out in our June 10, 1973, Declaration of Tendency, the roots of the present division in the Fourth International arise at least in part out of different evaluations of the May 1968 aborted revolution in France, in which the French Trotskyists played an important role. It was these comrades who drew the correct lessons from this experience: the necessity of being able to challenge the leadership of the Stalinist and Social Democrats over the workers movement; and that a prerequisite to achieving that objective was the rooting of our parties in the working class itself. This conclusion was not a surprising one to reach because it flows directly from the original 1938 Transitional Program. But the SWP leadership drew the opposite conclusions from those indicated by the method of the Transitional Program: they discovered that the students and middle class layers were suddenly possessed of a qualitatively new social weight; and that the power of students to be "detonators" took on a life of its own, almost above and beyond the level of the radicalization consciousness of the proletariat itself. Of course, even a cursory look at history disproves this concept, as is well indicated in the draft theses on Europe. History shows that a very large range of events have touched off explosions of the class. However, even major struggles of a limited character will not ignite the May 1968 type of upheavals if a radicalization, growth of self confidence, and demise of electoral illusions has not taken place in the proletariat.

It is of course true that the European perspectives document runs counter to the line of the *Worldwide Youth Rad-*

icalization document. This latter contribution proposes to the sections and cothinkers of the Fourth International a *global* student strategy, as is explained in its introduction:

"Over the past decade, a movement has grown from symptomatic indications of a mood of rebellion against a number of rotted institutions into a powerful revolt of youth on a global scale."

"The social group most affected by this process of radicalization up to now has been the student population, which owing to its increased social weight and its sensitivity to world politics, has taken on a greater and greater importance. The student youth do not reflect in any direct way the interests of the class to which they belong, or to which they will belong but reflect primarily the contradictions and class struggles of society as a whole. The student radicalization mirrors and announces the current crises of the world capitalist system, hence its characteristic strengths and weaknesses. . . ."

"The radicalization of youth is of crucial importance to the Fourth International and its sympathizing organizations. It poses a major challenge to the entire World Trotskyist Movement—how to provide leadership for it and win the best of the new generation to the banner of the Fourth International. Whether the Trotskyist current in a country is a small nucleus or an established tendency of some strength, this central task remains unchanged. To recognize and carry out this task is central to the work and orientation of the International in the next period."

As we have emphasized, the *Worldwide Youth Radicalization* document invests the student movement with qualitatively new and almost decisive social power. Furthermore, the document states explicitly that all sections of the International should proceed immediately to build separate youth groups. Following is a quotation from the section of the *Worldwide Youth Radicalization* document entitled, "The Tasks of the Fourth International Among the Youth":

"Three interrelated tasks are indicated by this analysis of the sweep of the radicalization of the youth; these are:

1. To win the leadership of the radical youth in spheres of both ideology and action.
2. To build strong Marxist youth organizations.
3. To draw new cadres from the youth to replenish the ranks and supply fresh energy to the leadership of the sections of the Fourth International."

We see that Comrade Mary-Alice is in favor of winning hegemony among the students but not among the vanguard elements of the working class, although undoubtedly as many "opponents" exist in the student milieu as among the new mass vanguard. Comrade Waters claims that one of the premises of the document on Europe (and one of her major reasons for opposing it) is that its line would mean that "we should turn away from many of the actual openings we have for intervention in important struggles such as the youth radicalization and the women's movement under the excuse that penetrating the factories takes priority." The European perspectives document does *not* propose turning away from these struggles. In fact, the Communist League has demonstrated its superior ability to conduct work among students and youth of the working class. The role of the French section in providing political and organizational leadership for the recent upsurge against the Debre Law was clearly recog-

nized by the entire left (not to mention the French bourgeoisie). As Jon Rothschild wrote in the April 2, 1973 issue of *Intercontinental Press*: "The spark plug of the mobilization has been the Ligue Communiste, one of the only far-left groups to have urged action against the Debre law before the current outbreak. On February 10-11, the Front des Cercles Rouge Lyceens (Front of High School Red Circles), a group in solidarity with the Ligue, held a national convention attended by more than 300 delegates from thirty-three French cities. High on the convention's agenda was discussion of action against the Debre law. The convention adopted a communique that noted that small-scale struggles had already broken out at some schools and recommended the extension of the struggle." It should also be noted that this role of the French section within the youth movement is the most significant one played by any section or party of cothinkers of the Fourth International in any country since the rise of the latest radicalization; this includes the role of the Young Socialist Alliance in the May 1970 student strikes in the United States, which was not nearly as significant. In our opinion, these recent actions in France only confirm that an orientation to the working class is a help and not a hindrance to the reaching of students.

The draft theses on Europe state very clearly that the rooting of the party in the class is the first priority. Any political line either explicitly or implicitly proposes priorities. The SWP leadership opposes placing priority on class penetration—not only in North America but even in Europe where the workers are far in advance! Obviously, the SWP leadership disagrees with Comrade Trotsky who gave no ifs ands or buts when he stated, "A party that doesn't participate in the real trade unions is not a revolutionary party." The SWP leadership also disagrees with Comrade Cannon who stated clearly: "We begin with the idea, that it is impossible to play a role in the unions unless you have people *in* the unions. With a small party the possibility to enter is the first essential. . . ." Instead, Comrade Waters and the SWP leadership stand squarely behind the *Worldwide Youth Radicalization* document which would have been more accurately titled *The Worldwide Student Radicalization*, as shown by the topics of its major section: The new social weight of the student radicals, the strategy of the Red University, and so on. What Comrade Mary-Alice is so concerned about when she talks of the need for separate "youth" groups is actually the need for separate "student" groups, since Comrade Waters states explicitly in her contribution that independent youth groups might not be appropriate for young workers.

The European draft theses, on the other hand, make rooting the party in the class the top priority. Unlike the *Worldwide Youth Radicalization* document, it recognizes the weaknesses of the student movement not only in terms of its lack of decisive social weight (which should be ABC), but also in terms of the political weaknesses of the students arising out of their petty bourgeois social origin. However, the European document does not oppose the building of genuine revolutionary youth organizations if the Trotskyist party has achieved an adequate base in the working class and enough influence on the vanguard to attempt such a project. Such a proposition is not at all dissimilar to that held by the Bolshevik party, as Lenin explained in *What is to be Done*:

"In the earlier period, indeed, we had astonishingly few forces, and it was perfectly natural and legitimate then to devote ourselves exclusively to activities among the workers and to condemn severely any deviation from this course. The entire task then was to consolidate our position in the working class. At the present time, however, gigantic forces have been attracted to the movement. The best representatives of the younger generation are coming over to us. Everywhere in the provinces there are people, who have taken part in the movement in the past or who desire to do so now and who are gravitating towards social-democracy (whereas in 1894 one could count the Social Democrats on the fingers of one's hand). A basic political and organizational shortcoming of our movement is our inability to utilize all these forces and give them appropriate work (we shall deal with this more fully in the next chapter). The overwhelming majority of these forces entirely lack the opportunity of 'going among the workers' so that there are no grounds of fearing that we shall divert forces from our main work." But the SWP leadership sees the building of specifically youth organizations as a prerequisite for building the sections themselves and refuses to take or even project preparatory steps for rooting itself in the class. Furthermore, the SWP leadership sees no danger for the party arising out of working in a primarily pettybourgeois milieu. Clearly if what were meant by the new mass vanguard was the student movement, the feminist movement, etc., Comrade Waters would be quite favorably inclined toward the draft thesis on Europe. If the strategy mapped out was not one of serious and consistent intervention in the class, but of jumping impressionistically from one opening to another, the SWP leadership would applaud. However, the European draft document specifically warns against such an approach:

"The essential job of any leadership worthy of the name is to set an order of priorities based on general analysis and perspectives and resist temptations to depart from it in an impressionistic way, under pressure of new important opportunities turning up in this or that sector . . . adhering to these priorities must also be combined with the necessary tactical flexibility so as to take advantage of abrupt turns and major opportunities that suddenly open up. But such flexibility must play the same role as utilizing reserves in military strategy. It cannot substitute for the strategy itself. Otherwise the basic orientation, the order of priorities, is lost, making for impressionistic leaps from one 'opening' to another."

D. Revolutionary Initiatives and the Leninist Vanguard

What we see then is that the real difference over the perspectives for Europe, and other countries as well, is that the International Majority reaffirms the historic attitude of Leninism and Trotskyism toward the proletariat, while the SWP's Minority tendency has developed revisionist theories in regard to the role of students and the middle classes in general. The second major difference is equally important. It has to do with the *way* in which the vanguard party *relates* to the masses and their advanced elements. The explanation of this task as offered by the International Majority comrades stands in contradiction to the entire approach of the Barnes-Sheppard leadership of the SWP over the past few years. The International Majority states that: "In its present stage, in view of the

nature of the mass vanguard and the newly politicized far left, no serious progress can be accomplished by means of febrile activism and superficial, primitive agitation."

"What is absolutely essential is to demonstrate the superiority of our program, to stand out as the main center of living Marxism in our time. Anything that is *not won on this basis* especially in the student and intellectual milieu, will not be definitely won. From this logically flows the importance of cadre training and theoretical and political elaboration on a high level." In our opinion this admirable approach of the International Majority is clearly at odds with the SWP leadership's minimalist strategy which emphasizes activism around single issues, and now exclusively around democratic and not transitional demands. No one can deny the extreme importance of democratic demands, but to limit all our agitation almost exclusively to such reform and not to put forward the more potent and consciousness-raising class and socialist demands, results in a fragmentation of our work, and over a long period a political degeneration of our practice and cadres.

Comrade Waters is dead wrong when she falsely claims that the European perspectives document poses the mass vanguard as a "substitute" for the party. And she is also wrong in her argument that the interests of the vanguard are contradictory to those of the masses. What the dispute really comes down to in this area is opposing views on the unfolding of the revolutionary process, and the inter-relation of objective and subjective factors, which is intrinsic to the theory of the Leninist party itself.

It is our view that the International Majority's document correctly forwards the traditional Leninist views on these matters. It has always been assumed that there are certain initial steps in the process of winning the broad masses to the leadership of the revolutionary party. The first step is the rooting of the party in the class and the winning of the advanced workers; that is, the vanguard of the proletariat. It is an axiom of Marxism that the road to the masses is through the vanguard and not around it. This is dictated, like everything else we do, by objective reality. The working class is not homogeneous; in fact it is stratified in many ways: geographically, by skills, levels of education, sex, nationality, past experiences, etc. The consciousness of the class is therefore also uneven. This forms the objective basis for the terms we employ such as "advanced workers" and "vanguard of the proletariat." Lenin took up this question very clearly in *Leftwing Communism*:

"The chief thing has already been achieved: the vanguard of the working class has been won over, has ranged itself on the side of the Soviet government and against parliamentarianism, on the side of the dictatorship of the proletariat and against bourgeois democracy. All efforts and attention should now be concentrated on the next step which may seem—and from a certain viewpoint—actually is less fundamental, but, on the other hand is actually closer to a practical accomplishment of the task. That step is: The search after the forms of the transition or approach to the proletarian revolution."

The revolutionary process involves first the winning of the advanced workers to the revolutionary nucleus and as the class struggle intensifies, the attraction of the masses of the working class to the advanced workers becomes consolidated. Trotsky described this process as it occurred

in the Russian revolution: "The Russian cadres of the party were scattered and to a considerable degree bewildered, but the party had authority among the advanced workers, Lenin had great authority with the party cadres. Lenin's political conception corresponded to the actual development of the revolution, and was reinforced by each new event. These advantages worked wonders in a revolutionary situation, that is, in conditions of bitter class struggle. The party quickly aligned its policy to correspond with Lenin's conception, to correspond that is, with the actual course of the revolution. Thanks to this, it met with firm support among tens of thousands of advanced workers. Within a few months, by basing itself upon the development of the revolution, the party was able to convince the majority of workers of the correctness of its slogans. The majority, organized into Soviets, was able in its turn to attract the soldiers and peasants . . . the development of the revolution precisely consists of the incessant and rapid change in the consciousness of the proletariat, the attraction of the backward layers to the advanced, the growing assurance of the class in its own strength. The vital mainspring in the mechanism of the party is its leadership. The role and the responsibility of the leadership in a revolutionary epoch is colossal."

Comrade Waters holds the view that the primary emphasis of our work in all milieus—including even proletarian layers such as the oppressed nationalities—must be among its student and middle class elements and arenas. For the SWP leadership, Women's Liberation work is to be focused on student feminists rather than on the most oppressed women because they believe these middle class layers to constitute the vanguard of these social groups. However, whenever the case is argued for a major orientation to the working class—in Europe or in the United States—we suddenly learn that we must orient toward the "broadest masses." But what the SWP leadership's position represents in practice is the view that to attempt to reach the vanguard of the proletariat is ultra-left and sectarian, while the students and middle class layers are both at one and the same time the real radicalized vanguard as well as the broad masses.

In the December 1970 issue of *International Socialist Review* there is an article by Ernest Mandel which explains Lenin's thinking on the disputed question in the following manner:

"The function of the revolutionary nuclei consists in developing revolutionary consciousness in the vanguard of the working class. The building of the revolutionary class party is the process whereby the program of socialist revolution is fused with the experience the majority of advanced workers have acquired in struggle."

It is significant that this article, published in our party's theoretical journal, has exactly the same outlook as the European draft theses, yet in the three years since its publication, it has never been attacked by the SWP leadership as any kind of revision of the Leninist concept of the party, or as representing any kind of short-cut theory. This is because the expressed ideas did not originate with Comrade Mandel but with Lenin.

In reality, it is Comrade Waters and the SWP leadership who propose the short cuts. They actually admonish the European comrades for giving the peripheral movements

a secondary emphasis to the primary movement, that of the proletariat. Comrade Waters can only derive this point of view from one of three assumptions: 1) that the peripheral movements have replaced the working class in its historic role; 2) that the peripheral movements have an equal importance in the revolutionary process with the proletariat; 3) that a primary orientation to the peripheral movements is easier and more profitable than the persistent and consistent work necessary to establish a base in the proletariat. No matter which assumption is her real one—and probably elements of all three views are involved—the same conclusion must be reached: It is the SWP's tendency in the international which has come up with a short-cut theory. Just as they pronounced themselves the "Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency" in order to cover up their own deviations from Leninist and Trotskyism, so they charge their opponents with having "short-cut theories" in order to detract from their own innovations.

The European document outlines two incorrect views of and rejects them. The first erroneous conception is based on the "spontaneist, opportunist, tailending" illusion that the *struggle itself leads automatically to revolutionary consciousness*: that the working masses (or sectors of those masses) will by the very logic of their struggle come to remove the subjective deficiencies that in the past have blocked the victory of every revolutionary upsurge in industrialized capitalist countries. The second false party-building conception which the European document warns against, is the "sectarian, propagandistic and ultimatic illusion," that is, the illusion that by simply increasing its numbers and expanding its press a revolutionary vanguard can succeed through education and propaganda in raising the level of consciousness among entire layers of the class. The International Majority Tendency is correctly steering away from both these dangers; but Comrade Waters and the SWP's Tendency are so upset and outraged because their own formulations, with which they have been misleading the SWP, reflect *both* these illusions to a large degree. The SWP leadership's minimalist single-issue approach—which had validity in constructing an anti-war coalition—has been unfortunately combined with a refusal to seriously introduce a revolutionary analysis and program even in an educational way to many areas of work, and the basis for this method is that the dynamic of the single-issue struggle (for Repeal of All Abortion Laws or Black Control of the Black Community) will lead by its own logic to revolutionary consciousness. And by refusing to participate in the day-to-day struggles of the working class, by refusing to bring our program *in action* into the class and oppressed communities, the SWP leadership falls prey to the second illusion of sectarian propaganda in the abstract. Lenin's argument that the broad masses learn only through political experience must be dialectically linked to his supplementary concept that *revolutionary consciousness cannot develop SPONTANEOUSLY*. The European document puts forward an orientation which meets both of these key requirements; the SWP leadership has counterposed no serious alternative in the Waters' document, but an *orientation in practice* which fails on both counts.

Finally, we must also protest against the horror revealed by Comrade Waters over the fact that the French Trotskyists actually engage in physical combat with the fascists. It is perfectly true that the comrades have dis-

rupted large fascist meetings, and in our opinion (although we can not judge the correctness of every tactical question from a distance of over 3,000 miles) such actions are fully in the tradition of Trotsky, Cannon and the Socialist Workers Party. We do not grant the right of fascists to free speech or even to exist because fascism is the ruling class's last defense, their solution to a social crisis. Fascism represents the potential annihilation of the entire workers movement for a whole period. As we pointed out earlier, there is the commencement of a great advance in workers struggles in Europe. These struggles have been particularly explosive in several countries, including France. Simultaneously the process of the organization of fascist gangs has occurred. The actions of our comrades in France is entirely consistent with the views of Trotsky in *Whither France*:

"Let the workers, despite the absence of a revolutionary situation, occasionally correct the papa's sons' patriots in their own way and the recruitment of new fascist bands will become incomparably more difficult."

As a matter of fact, it is a high point in the history of our own party that in the 1930's we took initiatives in organizing actions which prevented fascist meetings from being carried out with quite a bit of success, despite our small size. And the SWP was not hopelessly ultra-left in that period any more than the Communist League is hopelessly ultraleft today.

Trotsky pointed out in *Whither France?* the necessity of preparing far in advance for the seizure of power, not only politically but also for the armed struggle itself. He said that the party can and most provide the initial cadres for the workers' militia. But one doesn't have to read *Whither France* to confirm these basic ideas because they also are written into the Transitional Program:

"In connection with every strike and street demonstration, it is imperative to propagate the necessity of creating workers groups for self-defense. It is necessary to write this slogan into the program of the revolutionary wing of the trade unions. It is imperative wherever possible, beginning with the youth groups, to organize groups for self-defense, to drill and acquaint them with the use of arms . . . it is necessary to advance the slogan of a workers militia as the one serious guarantee for the inviolability of workers organizations, meetings and press . . . only with the help of such systematic, persistent, indefatigable, courageous agitational and organizational work . . . will we pave the road for conquest of power by the proletariat. . . . The arming of the proletariat is an imperative concomitant element to its struggle for liberation. When the proletariat wills it it will find the road and the means to arming. In this field also, the leadership falls naturally to the sections of the Fourth International."

The kind of activity carried out in actual struggle against incipient fascist movements is very useful from several points of view: it allows us to explain to and involve advanced workers in the correct way of dealing with fascists; second, it actually discourages the future formation and further organization of the fascists; third, it helps to build the party by attracting the most serious workers and students. Naturally the SWP leadership is incapable of understanding this part of the Transitional Program (as it is incapable of putting forward the rest of it) be-

cause our party exists in self-imposed isolation from the class.

E. Conclusion: For a Proletarian Party

Let us briefly restate our assessment of the meaning of the current debate in the International as it concerns Europe. There are two currents in the Fourth International, two assessments of the social process that is unfolding. It is a process in which the revolutionary Marxist organizations are not merely observers but are active participants. There are two views on how to build our sections and two views on how to build the International as a whole. One side puts forward new short-cut theories, the other does not. One side makes the rooting of parties in the working class a priority, the other side makes the peripheral movements the priority. Comrade Waters puts it this way:

"We are revolutionary politicians. We must be alert to possible openings for political work in the unions and plants. But at the same time we must recognize that it is around questions and issues like those raised by students, women, and the colonial revolution that the initial waves of the radicalization are tending to outflank the traditional working class leaderships, more rapidly than many struggles in the factories. We can win the leadership of such struggles, orient them in a revolutionary direction and link them up with working class struggles. This can result in rapid political advance in requirements and education of our cadres, who can gain valuable experience in leading mass struggles. *It is often through such channels that we begin to be looked upon as a significant political force and gain a hearing and initial recruits in the working class.*"

Some of Mary-Alice Waters' formulations do not match up with reality—very little if any "linking up" with the working class has occurred in the United States' cothinker party, and not much turning "in a revolutionary direction" has occurred either, unless one considers turning the Women's Liberation movement toward "Repeal of All Abortion Laws" to be "revolutionary." However, it is still quite evident that Comrade Waters is simply developing a rationalization for placing the priority squarely on the peripheral movements.

In 1938 Comrade Cannon wrote an article for *Socialist Appeal* which was appropriately titled, "There is No Short Cut." This is what he had to say:

"With others, impatience to reach the agreed-upon objective is giving rise to ideas which are false in conception and which if adopted by the party, would have fatal consequences. One of these false ideas born of impatience is the idea that we can find a short cut to the mass movement over the head of the trade unions. I mention this first because it is the most fundamental and the most dangerous. Mass agitation must be conceived, organized and developed, not as a substitute for the systematic penetration of the trade unions but as a supplement to it. Woe to the party that despairs of the trade unions and turns away from them! The harder such a party works and the more hysterically it shouts the sooner it will wear itself out.

"Mass work has many forms. It is necessary to combine them in such a way that each separate division serves the others. The modern proletariat is accustomed to act

through its organizations. Most basic and fundamental of these are the trade unions. A party which aims to lead the working class must acquire a strong base in the trade unions."

Cannon's remarks are still appropriate today. Comrade Waters and the SWP leadership propose a short-cut orientation for Europe which is based on the SWP's orientation in the United States. This orientation is incorrect for the United States and for Europe it is absurd. The comrades who today aspire to revive in theory and practice the proletarian heritage of Comrade Cannon and forty-five years of American Trotskyism, must not fail to recognize that it is the cadres of the International Majority Tendency who are moving down the proletarian road today, and not the pettybourgeois leadership of the Socialist Workers Party.

IV. TOWARD A DEMOCRATIC-CENTRALIST WORLD MOVEMENT

A. Historical Roots

The need for an international organization of the working class evolved from the development and internationalization of capitalism. Proletarian Internationalism, which is the political basis for the Fourth International, was theoretically explained in the *German Ideology*:

"Besides, the world market is pre-supposed by the mass of propertyless workers' labor power cut off as a mass from capital or even from a limited satisfaction and therefore no longer by the mere precariousness of labor, which, not giving an assured livelihood, is often lost through competition. The proletariat can thus only exist world historically, just as communism, its movement can only have a world-historical existence."

The call of Marx and Engels, 125 years ago, for Workers of All Countries to Unite, signified the transition of socialism from a narrow national chauvinist radicalism into an international working class movement. Since the publication of the *Communist Manifesto*, revolutionaries have aspired to create an international organization through which it would be possible to transform Marx and Engels' vision into a reality. Unfortunately, the experiences of the first three Internationals are a historical record of the difficulties of this task, although each has left a legacy to be absorbed by successors. We recognize the immense historical endeavor which comrades of the International Left Opposition undertook in 1933 in their decision to construct a new, Fourth International. This is essentially the same task which we, contemporary members of the World Trotskyist movement, must still concern ourselves with forty years later.

The concept of a truly democratic-centralist international is not some new phenomenon which has suddenly been created by the present majority of the World Movement in order to maintain political control through organizational domination. The necessity of organizing the World Revolutionary Party along democratic-centralist norms has been long recognized by Trotskyists and Leninists as the only way. In *The First Five Years of the Communist International*, Volume 1, Trotsky talks about the conditions for admittance to the Third International:

"Like each of its component Communist parties, the International is a centralized organization whose leader-

ship is concentrated in the Executive Committee, invested with full powers by a world congress which convenes annually. In contrast to all other international organizations, steeped in national prejudices, the Comintern is not a federation of independent national parties but a unified and great World Communist Party."

Clearly Trotsky was not confused about the organizational form of the international occurred in 1938. At this meeting the delegates adopted a set of statutes concerning the International's organizational modes. Many of the cadres of Trotskyism had first-hand experience with Stalinist and Social Democratic organizational forms and were fully aware of their dangers. Recognizing the necessity of Leninist organizational principles, the delegates voted them as the basis of the new International:

"The internal regime of the International on the local, national, and world scale, is determined by the principles and practice of democratic centralism.

"The sections are required to observe the decisions and resolutions of the International Conference, and in its absence, of the International Executive Committee, represented during the intervals between its meetings by the International Secretariat while nevertheless retaining the right of appeal before the next higher bodies until the next International Conference."

We are now approaching the 10th World Congress of the Fourth International and a new set of statutes are being proposed for adoption. In our opinion nothing has transpired since 1938 that requires the calling into question of the importance of taking steps toward organizing along democratic-centralist lines. One can argue one's own position for or against democratic-centralism on an international scale, but there can be no debate about the historic Trotskyist position on this issue.

Previous sections of this document have noted that within the past ten years since the reunification there has been an ascendancy in the number of anti-capitalist struggles throughout the world in which comrades of the Fourth International have participated and played a leading role: the worldwide struggle against U. S. imperialist aggression in Southeast Asia; the aborted revolution of May, 1968, in France; the heroic resistance against the rightwing coup in Bolivia during August, 1971; etc. The list is lengthy but even longer is the list of opportunities of which the Trotskyist movement has been unable to seize full advantage because of our relatively meager sources. These missed opportunities can be partially explained by pointing to several factors: our weak sections; insufficient financial resources; inexperience of our cadre; and the lack of a strong and authoritative International leadership.

For these and other reasons we agree with the International Majority in their perspective for taking concrete steps toward the development of a democratic-centralist International. The theoretical basis of an International leadership with the authority to carry out a unified line is rooted in the reality of today. As the Transitional Program states, "the economic prerequisite for the proletarian revolution has already in general achieved the highest point of fruition that can be reached under capitalism," and "the historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of the revolutionary leadership."

In 1938 World Trotskyism possessed an International which had fewer sections, smaller cadres, and less opportunities for open and mass revolutionary work. The com-

rades did not see it as a necessary prerequisite to first "construct" autonomous national sections which would then lay the basis for a democratic-centralist International in the future. In fact, there exists a dialectical relationship between the development of national sections and the International as a whole—without the organization of an International along the principles specified at the founding congress, the chances for creating a truly international party will decrease and not improve.

B. *The Role of the SWP Leadership in the Recent Period*

During the past period the concept and goal of a democratic-centralist International has come increasingly under attack in a blatant and intolerable fashion. The SWP leadership and the LSA/LSO have willfully violated what in our opinion are some of the basic principles of internationalism. In a display of arrogant disrespect for Comrade Trotsky's pleas for "First and Always the International," these parties openly denounced the official Argentine section in their public press. Proof of the fact that their intentions were solely factional—and not in the best interests of building the International or helping the section—is the fact that they made no attempt first to communicate their views through the elected International leadership or directly to the section. We fear that the actions of the SWP leadership and the LSA/LSO will set a very poor example for other parties, sympathizing groups, and affiliates of the Fourth International who have far less experience. Even though we ourselves did not agree with the actions of the PRT/ERP, we feel that the SWP and LSA/LSO were dead wrong in their actions. They completely disregarded the International as the final arbiter and saw it as necessary for themselves to politically act *for* the International. First, the SWP and LSA/LSO should have tried to win the elected International leadership to their views, and then (if they were successful) the appropriate body would have intervened. Certainly the SWP and LSA/LSO had the right to sharply criticize the PRT/ERP internally. But it is simply dangerous for national organizations to act in such a willful and maliciously individualistic fashion; this incident was more than just an attack against the Argentine section—it was more importantly an attack against the International.

What, then, is the view of the SWP leadership as to the type of organization required for World Trotskyism today? According to Jack Barnes, "The principal condition for international organization is international collaboration between leaderships developed out of the experiences of real organizations, fighting to build mass revolutionary Trotskyist parties in every country." This position is taken to task by Comrades Krivine and Frank in, "Again, and Always, the Question of the International."

It should be obvious to all those schooled in Leninist politics that democratic-centralism cannot be identical when practiced on both a national and international scale. Clearly this is not the issue in dispute. But why, then, does the SWP leadership oppose democratic-centralism? SWP National Committee member Milton Alvin, in his article, "Democratic Centralism and the International," lists two main reasons: first, the material basis is lacking; second, there doesn't exist the fullest democracy as yet to provide the means for centralism. These assertions are in our opinion being used as red herrings to hide the real

reason why the SWP leadership opposes democratic-centralism.

The fact is that within the last few years the SWP leadership has initiated an unannounced factional campaign among its ranks against the International and its elected leaders. This was most graphically crystallized in the public attack against the PRT, but there are other examples. Furthermore, the attitude of one important component of the SWP's Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency, Moreno, is clearly expressed in the unification document of the PSA/PRT (Verdad):

"... that, while recognizing the need for an International, neither of their executive committees, nor the party, will yield their inalienable right to determine strategy and tactics to any leadership or tendency that is not rooted in the proletariat and the Argentine people." (emphasis added)

A federated and "collaborative" body rather than a world vanguard party is the intention. Thus, for the SWP leadership and their international allies, the current discussion should lead only to a "hands off" policy toward their domestic work and international meddling (especially inside the IMG and in Argentina) and not to an authoritative and united world political line for the movement.

While this situation was tolerated previously, we do not believe it is correct to continue to allow full national autonomy to the SWP and LSA/LSO. The Krivine-Frank document, and the recommendations of Comrade Germain in "In Defense of Leninism, In Defense of the Fourth International," indicate that these comrades are serious in developing a real democratic-centralist International whose world congress decisions have some meaning for all Trotskyists.

The SWP leadership has systematically fostered contempt for the leadership of the Fourth International and the European sections, deliberately attempting to alienate its membership from the International in order to free itself for a split any time it sees fit. The SWP will remain in fraternal support to the International only as long as it can do so without any restrictions whatsoever on its sovereignty, or in its campaign against the elected leaders of the International and the sections who support them.

Furthermore, the SWP leadership opposes democratic centralism for the International while enforcing the most unLeninist norms in its own internal organization. We are referring to practices exemplified by the following representative incidents: 1) At the 1971 convention of the Socialist Workers Party an opposition tendency, the "For a Proletarian Orientation" Tendency, received nearly 10% of the vote of the membership but received no representation on the SWP's national committee; 2) through abuse of the system of electing delegates that minority received an *underrepresentation* of only 5% of the delegates; 3) at the projected 1973 SWP convention the method of electing delegates is again designed so that this time the opposition (supporters of the International Majority) will be underrepresented to an even greater degree; 4) in the Winter of 1972-72 a black youth was expelled from the Oakland/Berkeley branch of the Socialist Workers Party without a trial; 5) in that same period a former party member applied for readmission to the Los Angeles branch and was turned down on the grounds that he would not repudiate the views he held during the 1953

internal faction fight in the SWP; 6) in the Fall of 1971, immediately following the SWP convention, approximately 50 SWP and YSA members were suddenly transferred into the Oakland/Berkeley area in an effort to remove from leadership and responsible positions those comrades who had dared to support the "For a Proletarian Orientation" Tendency; 7) this massive transfer, in violation of the perspectives approved at the previous convention, was followed by a series of "forced graduations" of young party members (ages 22 to 24) out of the YSA. When the SWP leadership says that it does not believe the international to be ready for centralism, it means that it is not yet in control. If the SWP leadership should gain control, we expect that they would soon arrive at the conclusion that the international had "matured" and was now ready for centralism — SWP style.

Our opinion is that the difference presently in dispute are not severe enough to warrant the SWP's extreme split-oriented factional warfare that is endangering the unity of the International. The reason for this state of affairs can be traced to the blind, bigoted and destructive attitude of the SWP leadership toward any serious oppositional views that intrude on its home turf. The emergence of any organized tendency within its ranks is seen as a challenge to its leadership so that every political dispute is quickly transformed into a power struggle—that is, a struggle to smash the opposition. This same dead-end factionalism has now been introduced into the International.

C. Conclusions:

At this stage the International cannot be characterized as democratic-centralist. Because of the attitudes and behavior of the leaderships of various sections under the political tutelage of the SWP, a feeling of distrust and lack of confidence pervades the thinking of many comrades in the North American parties. In effect, the International is organized along federated lines. The objective conditions do not exist for transforming the International into a centralized world party overnight. A show of hands at the next World Congress will not be sufficient to bring about the reality that we desire. In order to achieve this goal several concrete tasks have to be undertaken.

In the Fourth International today there is general agreement around a historic Trotskyist program—and the analyses of major conjunctural events—that far outweighs the current disagreements. But all this is overshadowed by the obstacle of the SWP leadership's refusal to work collaboratively toward the goal of a democratic-centralist International. Comrade Germain states that two basic conditions must be met before we can achieve democratic-centralism in the International. First, the Minority must be convinced that it enjoys unrestricted democratic rights in discussion periods so that they have the fullest opportunity to win the membership to their line. Second, the Majority must be convinced that the Minority does not claim rights without duties and that the Minority is willing to loyally accept the Majority leadership, thus giving it a chance to show that it can carry out the political line.

In order to aid the building of a strong International leadership, the ranks must feel a sense of confidence in that leadership. This will come about only if the SWP leadership and its allies cease the slanderous attacks, falsifications, and conscious belittling of the Majority lead-

ership. Only if comrades relate to each other with a sense of mutual respect can any sense of confidence or loyalty develop. Also, it is central that all the national sections make a conscious effort to develop a strong atmosphere of internationalism in their own ranks. This can be done through the character of the party's political work, the press, etc. The membership will then develop an understanding that they belong to an international party and that what happens in another part of the world is integral to work in their own country. The SWP leadership is the worst offender in this regard. Its chauvinism is displayed through the self-centered character of its political work and political education. Its main interest in the affairs of sections of the Fourth International is to dig up information to "get" and "expose" the comrades. When the SWP Presidential candidate Linda Jenness was in Argentina she showed ultimate disrespect for our imprisoned comrades by appearing on the dictatorship's national television to talk about feminism rather than their plight. Even the antiwar work of the SWP, in many respects admirable, restricted itself to calling for "Out Now" and minimum effort was made to raise consciousness specifically around defense of the revolutionary movement abroad. Practices such as attacks on sections of the Fourth International can have only disastrous results since it will greatly undermine the ability to struggle on the part of smaller Trotskyist parties if they feel that the major sections and sympathizing groups will not only refuse to back them up, but will even denounce them in their press! This must come to a halt.

In order to develop a political outlook and sense of responsibility that is international in scope, it is important that the SWP participate in and help build international campaigns. An international defense campaign like Hugo Blanco's is a good model; but we must ad-

ditionally work to broaden out the work of USLA. Simply teaching comrades internationalism is not enough. Our political actions must correspond to our theory and the only way to really develop a sense of internationalism is to engage in political action which raises comrades' level of consciousness in this regard.

Finally, the SWP leadership should recognize its responsibility in helping to facilitate the fullest possible discussion for the next world congress by making available its tremendous apparatus for the translation and publication of documents. This would be a major step forward in building a sense of mutual respect between the Majority and Minority.

In our opinion the goal of building a truly democratic-centralist Fourth International remains on the agenda. It is a conception which has been intrinsic to the thinking of Trotskyists since our beginning. There are increasing opportunities for building a strong International in the coming period and we already have an impressive base in several important countries. We declare our loyalty to Trotsky's Fourth International. Although we disagree with the Majority leadership on some questions, we recognize its authority and pledge ourselves to aid in the carrying out of its political line. We will struggle against all those who seek to undermine it and tear down its authority. We Trotskyists are internationalists above all, and that means we subordinate the interests of our national movement to the needs of the World Movement. The SWP, although not formally affiliated with the International, should be its financial mainstay—it is the richest party in the richest country in the world. We demand that the SWP leadership devote full material and moral support to the Fourth International and its elected leadership.

July 14, 1973

ON THE BLACK PARTY SLOGAN

by Peter Gellert, Houston Branch

The major propaganda axis of the SWP's work in the Black community revolves, as everyone knows, around the call for the establishment of an independent Black political party. In my opinion this is an incorrect slogan to advance and fundamentally miseducates workers about a Marxist approach to the national question.

I wish to make it clear at the beginning that I don't think that if somehow the demand was eliminated then the party's position on Black liberation would be correct. Rather, I think the Black party slogan is indicative of the line of the SWP and this contribution will hopefully clarify in comrades' minds what is wrong with the party's nationalist approach. This contribution is in agreement with the line of the document "Building a Revolutionary Party in Capitalist America" submitted by the Internationalist Tendency.

While the only party Marxist "support" is the vanguard party, that is, sections and sympathizing groups of the

Fourth International, at various times we extend support or call for other electoral slates of a working-class character, the criteria being that they don't cross class lines. However, such support is always critical, the amount of criticism depending on a variety of objective circumstances. Thus, for example, the SWP would probably support candidates of a labor party or might consider extending critical support to candidates of the CP, SP or even SLP. Comrade Cannon's writings on both the labor party slogan and the 1948 Progressive Party campaign of Henry Wallace are particularly valuable for a study of this question.

What does the Black party slogan say? It says, in essence, that *all* Black people have interests as Black people *separate and apart* from *all* white people and must organize separately. While positive in that it represents a break with the racist Democrats and Republicans and shows an awareness of the need to struggle against op-

pression, it is a non-class slogan and reinforces the concept that Black and white workers don't have common interests in this society. It thus attempts to draw a national perspective at the ballot box.

Of course we defend the *right* of Blacks to organize their own separate party if they wish. Depending on programmatic and tactical considerations we might even extend critical support. However that's entirely different from *advocating* it, to say nothing of making it one's central propaganda axis for a period of over ten years.

The SWP argues that a Black party would be a working-class party because a majority of Blacks are workers. This argument is wrong on several accounts. First, it implies that workers could never follow a bourgeois or petty-bourgeois party because of their innate class instincts, which, unfortunately and obviously, isn't the case. Secondly, it forgets that the majority of any nationality are workers. Indeed, the majority of adult human beings are workers. Third, if what the SWP is talking about is a Black labor party, this is clearly wrong since it is ridiculous to *advocate separate* labor parties for different nationalities within the same country.

Why do Blacks need a separate party? "Because they're oppressed" is the answer. Aside from the fact that this is a rather moralistic rather than a Marxian materialist approach to politics, the immediate question that pops into mind is "what about women?" Of course, some comrades openly say that women too need their own political party and we should call for it, since they're oppressed as women. This absurdity is carried still further by the 1970 Rhode Island SWP campaign which called for an independent Portuguese political party (!!!) (There is a significant Portuguese minority in Rhode Island so the good, opportunist thing to do is to call for them to organize their own political party, that way they'll love us.) However, giving credit where it's due, the official SWP position is that Blacks, unlike women or gays, are a nation fighting for self determination and in this fight they need their own party.

Leaving aside the question of whether Blacks are a nation, it simply is not true that Blacks are fighting for self-determination. With the exception of the Black Muslims and some of the more exotic nationalist sects, the fact remains that the overwhelming majority of Black people have no interest at the current time in forming their own state. And whether with heightened class struggles this becomes a significant — to say nothing of a dominant — trend remains to be seen.

The SWP leadership notwithstanding, the most likely variant in my opinion is that as the working class as a class starts engaging in radical action the tendency will be towards Black and white workers recognizing each other as potential allies and separatist feelings on the part of the Black proletariat will probably decrease.

Of course, if Blacks were demanding self-determination (which we must remember, only refers to state forms, that is, a separate national state), which we support their right to do, then any Black bourgeois party leading this fight we would oppose, and counterpose Marxism as the solution for the Black masses. However, this is jumping the gun a bit. The question remains, why advocate a nationalist party? Where in the history of Leninism have we ever advocated that the working class organize itself

on the basis of nationality?

Some comrades will probably rush to the defense of the Black party slogan with a quote or two by Trotsky about the importance of minority representation and how we would support a Black candidate over a white candidate (all other things being equal) on this basis. There is a certain comic amusement in this argument. Majority comrades constantly argued against the Proletarian Orientation Tendency by citing the long and varied quotations as schematic, formalistic, undialectical, ripped out of context (although they rarely said what the context was), etc. However, when so much as a sentence can be had to support the leadership's position, one never hears the end of it. The context of Trotsky's comments are as follows: he was speaking at a time when there was virtually no Blacks in public office, thus the fight for Black representation was quite progressive and in order. Today, obviously, this situation no longer exists. The Democrats and Republicans would like nothing better than to run Black Uncle Toms and there are a plethora of Black mayors and other elected officials. To those majority comrades who like to quote Trotsky on the Black question in America (and, I might add, ignore him on everything else) several things should be said. Trotsky was speaking at a time when the majority of Blacks were concentrated in the Black belt of the deep South, and thus there existed more the material basis for nationhood than exist presently. Trotsky was also ignorant of the situation of Blacks in the U.S., for example, he felt they had their own national tongue, and spoke English around whites, etc.

Assuming that there is a possibility of a Black party actually forming (despite the best wishes of the SWP there has been no motion in this direction among radicalized Black masses, including the four-year college students the YSA would like to recruit) what would be its program?

(Here in Texas the party's "critical" support to the Raza Unida Party is, in reality, uncritical support since there are never any programmatic criticisms made of the RUP's non-Marxist political program. When was the last time *The Militant* posed a *Marxist* program for LRUP?) Are we to assume that since the most consistent nationalists are revolutionary socialists that it will automatically be socialist, or do we foresee a fight with the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois elements in the Black community which the SWP claims barely exists. How is the Black party slogan designed to break the hold of racism on white workers and help unify the class?

The SWP's call for a Black party and its whole nationalist orientation is based on trying to convince Blacks, mainly Black students to be more specific, that we're more nationalist than anyone else. Rather than project a Marxist alternative and thus help educate Black and white workers on how to fight racism, the party's approach is to opportunistically tailend what we conceive of as surface impressions. Our work in the Black movement is characterized by a lack of seriousness and a vague abstractness, coupled with a physical isolation from the actual struggle and a refusal to go where the masses are. Ignoring, for the most part, legitimate community struggles around daycare, cutbacks, etc., the bulk of our work has centered around Black contingents for WONAAC and NPAC marches, contingents organized from the office and isolated from the struggle. While our recent involve-

ment in ALD demonstrations is a step in the right direction, the party has attempted to tailend this development and failed to put out its political line to the activists involved.

The fact that the YSA and SWP cannot make significant gains in terms of Black recruitment when (1) we're in the deepest radicalization since the First Crusades, (2) the

radicalization in the Black community is nationalist in character, and (3) we're the only tendency on the left supporting nationalism, merely indicates how far removed the SWP is from the tasks confronting our party in the current period.

July 19, 1973

ON THE OAKLAND-BERKELEY DISCUSSION
BY CELIA STODOLA

by Celia Stodola, Oakland-Berkeley Branch

July 11, 1973

Political Committee
Socialist Workers Party

United Secretariat
Fourth International

Dear Comrades:

This letter constitutes a protest against undemocratic procedures employed by members of the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency in the Oakland-Berkeley branch, against the democratic rights of supporters of the International Majority Tendency. We request that this protest be published in the SWP Internal Bulletin series, and we are sending a copy also to the United Secretariat because it contains important information as to the manner in which the current political debate is being conducted inside the Socialist Workers Party.

On June 10, a "Statement of Support to the International Majority Tendency" was issued, which—like a previous announcement by the Internationalist Tendency—declared the formation of a tendency adhering to the general line of the IMT. This statement clearly indicated our support to various documents in the world movement dispute, which we assumed would be coming up for a vote in one form or another. The statement ended with the following point: "There remain several additional issues in dispute within the world Trotskyist movement which are not presently incorporated into the Tendency Declaration of the International Majority as a basis of support. These include the nature of Stalinism, the struggle for women's liberation as opposed to feminist ideology, the correct slogans for the Middle East and Indian subcontinent, etc. We will state our attitude on these matters at the appropriate time."

During the first several weeks of pre-convention discussion, supporters of the IMT in the Bay Area (including both tendencies) participated in debates on Latin America and Europe. In each case supporters of the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency were allotted one hour, and supporters of the IMT were also given one hour. Then, on

Saturday, June 23, the branch organizer (Frank Boehm) informed the Executive Committee that discussions would be organized around two issues that were *not* based on line resolutions scheduled for a vote at the SWP convention at the present time. One of these was a discussion of a plenum report given by Jack Barnes on the "New Unfolding World Situation," and the other was on Vietnam. At that time it was said that the subject of "Vietnam" included both a balance sheet on the SWP's work in the antiwar movement, and the issues raised in the document by Sterne. Supporters of the IMT requested equal time in both instances.

On Monday, July 2, the acting branch organizer (John Votava) asked me to explain where our Tendency disagreed with the Barnes plenum report and I did, in a few sentences. He reported this to the branch meeting that night, and we were granted equal time (one hour). The following Friday, July 6, the debate was held. On Saturday, July 7, an Executive Committee meeting occurred which discussed the Vietnam debate. At that meeting I was asked to state our Tendency's views on Vietnam. In the same fashion in which I had explained our differences with the Barnes plenum report, I outlined in a few sentences that our Tendency had strong criticisms of the Vietnam work of the SWP and disagreed with the SWP's assessment of the peace accords. I was asked where our Tendency "stood on the Sterne document" Since the document had only recently become available and was not up for a vote, I explained that we had no position on the document as a whole. I was then told that my answer was "inadequate" and that our Tendency would be granted equal time to present our views to the branch *only* if we first stated our disagreements with the SWP on Vietnam in writing, and *only then* if the statement met with the "approval" of the local branch executive committee!

I was also informed by Comrade Votava that our Tendency in reality had "no differences" with the Jack Barnes report, and that we had misled the branch into giving us time for a presentation. He stated an opinion to the effect that this must not be allowed to happen again, and

that the branch must have a way of protecting itself against our tricks. Comrade Votava was the spokesperson for the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency on the question of the Barnes report; it was clear at that time that nobody on the Executive Committee disagreed with his opinion except myself.

I must insert here that since the inception of the discussion in our branch, supporters of the IMT have been repeatedly charged with not proceeding properly. This charge has been the main factional axe used against us by supporters of the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency. When we originally announced that we supported the IMT, we were ordered that we could not have the right to speak for IMT documents in branches unless we first put that statement into writing—even though in the past, other tendencies were not required to do this. Next we were told that even though we supported the Germain document and the European perspectives document, we "had no documents" and we "had no position." Repeatedly supporters of the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency have spent their time in the discussion charging that our Tendency Declaration says "nothing," that we have "no politics" and "no positions," etc. All of this raising of the organizational question, right from the beginning of the debate, is essentially an attempt to cast suspicion upon ourselves and the IMT as somehow "illegitimate." (We will note here that at the 1971 SWP convention the same charges of "illegitimacy" were raised against the Proletarian Orientation Tendency, and were used as a basis for excluding them from receiving any representation on the SWP National Committee—even though they won almost 10 percent of the party's vote!)

In addition, throughout the entire discussion so far, the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency has been demanding that we transcribe from the tape recordings of the debates this or that statement or report made by our spokespersons, and send them into the national office to be published in the discussion bulletin. Needless to say, we are a rank-and-file tendency and we have the responsibility for writing all of our own documents and speeches to be given at the convention, and we often incorporate into these projects much material used by representatives in local debate. Therefore we have no desire for these reports to be printed in advance in the discussion bulletin. Nevertheless, the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency persists in continual harassment from an organizational point of view, with demands that we transcribe this or that, or else we are supposedly admitting that we are "afraid" to stand by our politics.

Consequently, when the branch Executive Committee charged that my presentation to them on our Tendency's differences on Vietnam were "inadequate" and that we would not be granted the equal time unless we came up with "better" differences and put them in a written statement which would then be judged by the Executive Committee, it was clear to us that the Executive Committee of the branch was intervening in the preconvention discussion in an attempt to make us acknowledge that all their factional charges about our alleged illegitimacy were true. Since the inception of the debate the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency has charged that our politics were "unclear" and "inadequate." Now the local Executive Committee made it as a condition for our receiving the right to equal time in debates, that we had to concede that this was true, and "cooperate" in their efforts to "protect" the branch

by drawing up written statements which they could judge.

There are two major reasons why we could not go along with this:

1) The members of the branch Executive Committee were claiming that we had "tricked them" in regard to our request for equal time in the debate over Jack Barnes' plenum report ("The New Unfolding World Situation"). They argued that although we had claimed to have differences, it turned out (after hearing the debate) that our differences were "not sufficient." For us to agree to this *new method* of writing down statements for the Executive Committee to judge whether or not we could speak, would constitute an *agreement* on our part that the attacks of the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency on us had been justified.

2) In conjunction with the above, we were not willing to turn over to the branch Executive Committee the right to determine whether or not, or with whom, our Tendency stands in agreement. SWP National Committee alternate Paul Montauk argued repeatedly that *if* we stated that we supported the general line of Sterne's discussion contribution, we would "automatically" receive equal time. No other member of the branch Executive Committee differentiated themselves from this view, which essentially means that we can only disagree on the terms that are decided by the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency. As stated earlier, since the Sterne document was not being forwarded for a vote, and has not yet been incorporated into any Tendency as the basis of support, we felt that we did not have to take a position "for or against" the whole thing, but only "for or against" certain sections of it. It was clear to us that once we allowed the precedent that the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency members of the Executive Committee had the right to determine for us whether or not we agreed with the SWP line, this would be used against us in attempts to force us to instantly adhere to this or that position in order to receive speaking rights.

We made it absolutely clear to the branch leadership that on all line resolutions scheduled for a vote, we would either submit our own document or declare support for someone else's. In regard to special educational discussions scheduled during the preconvention period in our particular branch on short notice—such as the Barnes plenum report or on the issue of Vietnam—we would state our differences verbally in advance and elaborate them in writing for the discussion bulletin only if we felt it necessary and a priority over our work of preparing documents for the main resolutions on which there was to be a vote. We do not think it correct for the Executive Committee of a branch to determine whether supporters of a national and international tendency "really agree" or "disagree" on this or that point; we consider that to be our prerogative. Of course, comrades of the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency have a right to hold *opinions*; but when they attempt to legislate these opinions by taking away our speaking time, this is another matter. We do not see how this can enable the SWP to have the fullest discussion. If they believe our views really are "inadequate" and "insufficient," let them discredit us in a *fair* debate—rather than in advance prohibiting us from having a chance to fully express our positions.

On Monday, July 9, the branch Executive Committee met and decided they would grant supporters of the IMT

a grand total of one half hour, and themselves double that amount (one hour) for the Vietnam debate! During the branch discussions the local leaders of the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency—Frank Boehm and Paul Montauk—presented a caricature of the positions I had stated to the Executive Committee in regard to our Tendency's view of the SWP's errors on Vietnam. Montauk stated that the only difference I claimed our Tendency held was that there were too many Democratic Party politicians at some antiwar demonstration in San Francisco. Boehm charged that I said I "didn't know" where our Tendency stood on the question of the SWP's attitude toward the peace accords. Both these statements were totally and completely false. In addition, the branch leadership now claimed that the only real substantive issue to be debated in regard to Vietnam was the theoretical question as to whether the VCP was "Stalinist-trained" or essentially the same as a Trotskyist party—a view they attribute (verbally) to Comrade Sterne. That is, they were now suddenly changing the whole concept of the discussion so it could be narrowed down to best serve their factional interests, and not the best needs of the discussion itself. Finally, Frank Boehm (on behalf of the Executive Committee) denied our claim that there was a connection between their charges about our views being "inadequate" and "insufficient" in the *past*—especially in regard to the discussion of the Barnes plenum report—and their *present* allegations that our views are "insufficient" and "inadequate." This absurdity requires no response. The branch voted in its overwhelming majority to support the Executive Committee's proposal to give us only half-time, although several members of the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency did speak for and defend our democratic rights.

Our opinion is that this action of the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency members of the Oakland-Berkeley branch against adherents of the IMT, constitutes a continuation of their general policy of trying to "get" the IMT by any means necessary. Since the beginning of the discussion this approach has been characterized by a continued campaign around organizational questions of charging that we are not proceeding properly, that we are tricking and deceiving the party, that we are somehow illegitimate. (At the same time we hear over and over again that Germain's document, "In Defence of Leninism," is also a "trick" document in that it attempts to deceive comrades on what the views of the IMT really are; that Livio Maitan "tricked" and "deceived" delegates at the 9th World Congress in regard to the existence of the PRT-Combatiente's Yellow Book; that Trotskyists in Europe are being deceived about the SWP's views because the IMT won't print the SWP's documents; etc.) Never at any time has the Oakland-Berkeley branch leadership made an attempt to sit down and discuss in a comradely way—or in any way—with IMT representatives here, just how the preconvention discussion could best be organized to everyone's maximum satisfaction. The one IMT supporter on the branch Executive Committee simply hears the proposals when announced by the organizer—usually one or two weeks in advance. Never has the SWP national office contacted us in regard to the way we are proceeding—either with criticisms, or suggestions for improvements. We believe their whole approach is to treat supporters of the IMT as something separate from the party and not legitimate; the tendency of

the SWP leadership to equate any serious political opposition automatically with disloyalty.

We think we have a substantial basis for making this charge, for the following reasons: (1) A new system of electing delegates to the SWP national convention has been instituted, which will underrepresent supporters of the IMT to an even greater extent than the major oppositional group (the Proletarian Orientation Tendency) was underrepresented at the last SWP convention. (2) The massive transfer of approximately 50 SWP and YSA members into the Oakland-Berkeley branch following the 1971 SWP convention. At that time the Oakland-Berkeley branch had a larger number of minority supporters than any other branch. The mass transfer was in total violation of the perspective just approved at that convention, for building up branches in outlying areas. No official reason was ever given for this unprecedented number of transfers. But it was clearly perpetrated for the purpose of providing the SWP majority with an overwhelming number of votes in order to take punitive action against supporters of the minority. (3) The events which transpired during the next year and a half featured numerous attacks on the rights of the political minority. This was begun when the branch leadership decided to run a slate for the Executive Committee in the fall of 1971. Then came selective graduations from the YSA: comrades who had supported the Proletarian Orientation Tendency were immediately removed from youth work when they turned 25; comrades who supported the majority had special motions passed in order to permit them to stay in the YSA as long as they wanted. Next came "forced graduations" from the YSA: supporters of the minority who were only 22 or 24 were taken out of youth work against their will. In neither of the cases of the selective nor forced graduations, were charges of any disloyal political acts openly used by the SWP majority; they simply gave fraudulent and irrelevant reasons for their actions. This was followed by the removal of minority comrades from responsible assignments solely on grounds of their political differences.

Consequently when we protest this refusal of the Oakland-Berkeley branch leadership to give equal and adequate time to IMT supporters, we are not doing this merely because the incident itself is worthy—which it is—but also because this new violation is representative of the overall character of the treatment of IMT supporters and other oppositions in this branch. In particular we note that the raising of the "organizational question" right at the start of the discussion by the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency, is exactly one of the things Cannon polemicized against in *Struggle for a Proletarian Party*.

We think that the supporters of the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency have made a big mistake in this instance. The issue of Vietnam is no minor one, by any means—in terms of theory, analysis, and the practical work of the party. In addition, we think that the views of Comrade Sterne in his discussion article—many parts of which we support—are important enough to be presented accurately to the ranks of the SWP. We can not see how the organization of the Vietnam discussion in this undemocratic fashion—coupled with the destructive campaign to prove the "illegitimacy" of the IMT and their American supporters—can best serve the interests of the inter-

national discussion and the building of the Fourth International, from any point of view.

Comradely,
s/Celia Stodola, member of Oakland-Berkeley Branch Executive Committee, and representative of IMT supporters in the East Bay

AN ULTRALEFT RETROSPECTIVE:
An Answer to the IT's Misrepresentations of Our GI Work

by Michael Smith, Lower Manhattan Branch,
New York Local

The political counterresolution makes an assessment of our GI work (THE BUILDING OF A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY IN CAPITALIST AMERICA, p. 19). On the plus side of the ledger they list our work at Fort Jackson with GIs United Against the War. Thereafter there are no more pluses, only minuses, and a lot of them. They charge that after Fort Jackson (spring of 1969) our work was "suddenly discontinued." They imply that our comrades sought to avoid conscription and that "the result was that our presence and perspectives within the G.I. movement were tragically under-represented." They berate us for not going to the "vanguard" of GIs with slogans more advanced than "*Free Speech for GIs*." They condemn us for supporting the demand for abolishing the draft. Finally, they regard our intervention as "inadequate" and state that this resulted in small Vietnam solidarity actions. They bottom line their balance sheet with this judgment: "*The Vietnamese revolution is paying for these errors.*"

A rather harsh condemnation indeed. Two years ago the FAPO tendency made some of the same allegations, supporting them with the underlying contention that the party had become petty-bourgeoisified. This year's crop of grippers back up their contention with the observation that the party represents a right-opportunist current in the world movement. When we got this way they don't specify. Anyway, their balance sheet becomes unbalanced when weighed against the facts, as this contribution will serve to demonstrate.

Lessons of Fort Jackson

They state that with the Fort Jackson case the party made a magnificent breakthrough. Agreed. But why? And how? The comrades of the Internationalist Tendency (IT) don't go into this. They don't include in their balance sheet the lessons of our experience there because those lessons run counter to the line they are asking us to vote on.

Part of the reason for our success with the Fort Jackson case was that we—and not any other political group—understood the current radicalization. We thought the youth rebellion against authority was positive, not merely *petty-bourgeois*. We thought the advancing nationalist consciousness amongst Blacks and Latinos was positive, not *peripheral*. We thought that insistence on democratic rights was positive, and not secondary or *minimalistic*.

Comrades will recall that GIs United Against the War at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, was initially organized by Black and Puerto Rican GIs who gathered in the bar-

racks to hear Malcolm X tapes. These tapes were gotten from the party tape service by Pvt. Joe Miles on his initiative. Joe was a YSAer on leave from the YSA for his period of service and stationed in the deep South. The group of GIs around Joe—who had singular leadership qualities—came to realize that it was the war that most immediately oppressed them as Blacks and Puerto Ricans. In order to build the largest most effective organization possible to promote their antiwar views they invited white GIs to join. Support was based on three points: opposition to the war; opposition to racism in the Army; and opposition to the suppression of the democratic right to communicate their political ideas. The last two points are noteworthy.

The organization grew as a result of the initial supporters going around the base circulating a petition which called upon the commanding general to grant the soldiers a meeting place so that they could discuss the war and Army racism and then communicate their sentiments to their congressional representatives. The coupling of *democratic* and *nationalist* demands was explosive. The last meeting GIs United held was attended by over 200 uniformed GIs right there on the base. Comrades of the IT, you like the results but you disagree with how they were achieved. You can't have it both ways.

Another reason for the success was that by pure chance 3 of our comrades who were on leave from the party happened to be on the same base, in the same area, and at the same time. 1969 was the high point for us in terms of the number of Trotskyists in the military. There were 6 out of a 2,700,000 man military.

After the Fort Jackson events in about the summer of 1969 the military stopped drafting us by and large. But it was too late. We had made our point, to the antiwar movement (which had heretofore not looked upon GIs as potential allies), to other GIs, and to potential GIs, most of whom were on high school and college campuses, not in the trade unions.

We Continued the Work

The IT charges that after Fort Jackson, "This work was, however, suddenly discontinued." This is not true. Afterwards we energetically used every institution of the party to advance this work, to reach the servicemen with the antiwar movement's message. A few examples: We ran Andrew Pulley, a former member of GIs United, for Vice-President. The paper's coverage of the GI movement has been the best of any paper in the country. We sent Norman Oliver

over to interview Black GIs in Germany and report on it for *The Militant*. Two national tours were organized for former members of GIs United. The magazine published an article on GIs United and our publishing house published a book, which is a good organizing manual, on the events. But above all, we continued to build the mass actions against the war which gave such great impetus to the GI antiwar movement. (For an extended discussion of all our activities see my article in Vol. 29 No. 22 of the SWP Discussion Bulletin, August 1971)

Tactics that Work

The IT comrades criticize what they call our "exclusive single-issue antiwar approach." They write that in retrospect we should have raised demands that go beyond *Free Speech for GIs* and which are aimed at "the more conscious elements." It is not true that we had a single-issue approach. Which issue or combination of issues we put forward is of course a tactical question based on what meets the needs of the GIs and will advance their struggle. We emphasized the war, racism, and democratic liberties. The IT comrades don't think this was good enough. Instead they suggest things like "*Abolition of Rank and Military Discipline*" and "*Election and Control of Barracks*." I think demands of this nature would have fallen on deaf ears at the time. The American Servicemans Union, a group whose central leaders were in or influenced by the ultraleft Workers World party and their youth group, Youth Against War and Fascism, tried this. It didn't work and they usually wound up turning the ultraleft coin over and agitating for things like better food in the mess hall. *This was no help to the Vietnamese!*

The IT adherents contend that to raise issues like those raised by the ASU would have helped our "more permanent work within the armed forces." It didn't help the ASU. They have evaporated. On the other hand the example we set will not be forgotten in future struggles, just like the fight over Bring Us Home raised by GIs at the end of WW II was not forgotten by us. Indeed one of the fruits of the work of our comrades is now engraved into bourgeois law. An Army Directive entitled *Guidance on Dissent* was issued immediately after the Fort Jackson 8 victory over the signature of a 3-star general by order of the Secretary of the Army. The memo counseled field commanders to take a more relaxed view of coffee-houses, the GI underground newspapers, on-post demonstrations by civilians, and dissent in general.

Opportunist Adaptation?

The IT indict the party's support to the slogan *Abolish the draft*, charging that this was "an opportunist adaptation to reformist and pacifist anti-draft sentiment." *There is nothing reformist about the pacifist sentiment of the*

masses! At least Lenin didn't think so. Was he wrong? Our party has always been unconditionally opposed to capitalist conscription. But we are against individual acts of draft resistance. In the absence of mass resistance we submit to the draft and go with our class. This was our policy during both WW II and the Vietnam war, the libel of the IT concerning the use of "Joe Miles" letters to avoid conscription notwithstanding.

Forced conscription was introduced at the onset of the cold war. It was repealed some 2 years ago. The time span since WW II was the first time, with one exception, that the American people had been subjected to this. Many Americans emigrated here to flee forced conscription in Europe. It was only with the onset of the cold war that the ruling class was able to break a strong tradition and institute a permanent "peace-time" draft. It is a mark of the deep radicalization that after 25 years the ruling class had to reconsider and retreat.

And the IT doesn't see this reaffirmation of democratic liberties as a victory! The new "volunteer" army is in serious trouble. The ruling class is very much exercised about the situation. Just read their press. Let me put the question to the IT comrades this way: Don't you think they'll have to pay a big price if they try to re-introduce conscription? Of course. That's why they haven't moved to do it by now.

Small Actions?

Their last charge is that *our* Vietnam solidarity actions were of small size. I am not sure what they mean by Vietnam solidarity actions. If they mean ones that were aimed at the "vanguard" and proceeded under banners like *Victory to the NLF* they are right. Actions of this nature did take place, with support from ultralefts, and not GIs, who couldn't relate to them. We took no organizational responsibility for those actions. They were not, in this sense, *our* actions. The *Out Now* demonstrations which we proudly take responsibility for were not small. Many GIs swelled their ranks—even led them—and the actions created a favorable climate in which GIs could organize.

Why Raise the Question of Our GI Work Now?

The question of our GI work in the anti-Vietnam war movement is an historical one. It doesn't call for a vote and should have no place in a line document. The question of *why is this section in the document* is intriguing. The IT comrades have misrepresented the reality of the situation as it existed 3 and 4 and 5 years ago, and they have misrepresented what our response was to it. This can only confuse newer comrades. It could be useful in netting votes of dissidents. Last, it does give comrades in other sections and sympathizing groups of the F.I. who are to whatever degree influenced by the Mandel-Maitan-Frank tendency evidence to bolster the contention that the Socialist Workers Party is "right-opportunist."

July 18, 1973

LOOKING BACKWARD: THE SWP AND GAY LIBERATION,
1970-1973

by Lee Smith, Lower Manhattan Branch, New York Local

Introduction

In coming to the decision that the orientation to the gay liberation movement embodied in the April 29, 1973, Memorandum on the Gay Liberation Movement (*Discussion Bulletin*, Vol. 31, No. 3) is not an adequate or correct one for the party, I reviewed the steps leading to the National Committee's decision. Going over this brief history convinced me that the record as most comrades are aware of it is incomplete. This article seeks to fill gaps in comrades' knowledge of how the party has proceeded to this point. It is written with the idea that looking at mistakes in the process that led to the memorandum will help to throw light on what is wrong with the NC's current attitude and proposals.

[Note: This article was drafted before I had received and read the Internationalist Tendency's counterresolution, "The Building of A Revolutionary Party in Capitalist America" (*DB*, Vol. 31, No. 18), which contains a distorted reference to some of the history covered here. The reference comes in the context of a sleazy appeal to gay comrades whom the Internationalist Tendency alleges have been treated in a "scandalous" manner by the party. Rather than rewrite this article to specifically answer distortions in the Internationalist Tendency's resolution, I am submitting it as originally drafted. A future brief article from one of the supporters of "For an Intervention Into the Gay Liberation Struggle" (*DB* Vol. 31, No. 15) will specifically take up distortions in the Internationalist Tendency's counterresolution.]

Membership Policy: The Prelude

The Memorandum on Membership Policy, adopted Nov. 13, 1970 (printed as an Appendix in *DB*, Vol. 31, No. 3) refers to the party's and the YSA's "moving toward" proscribing homosexuals from membership, to an "evolution." While this is accurate, the evolution was pretty well advanced by the time the rise of the gay liberation movement prompted the party to stop to consider, motivate, and reaffirm the exclusion of homosexuals in the spring of 1970. Prior to 1970, most comrades referred to "the policy," and not to "the evolution."

Comrade Joel Britton presented the organizational report to the National Committee plenum, Feb. 27-March 1, 1970. It marked the first time the exclusion of homosexuals had been discussed by the NC. Presumably, in discussions preparatory to the plenum, this evolving policy was discussed for the first time by the Political Committee. Comrade Britton presented the exclusion of homosexuals as a matter of security, designed to protect the party from victimization. No one challenged the policy or the motivation for it.

However, one comrade did raise the question of whether there wasn't more involved than just opening the party to legal victimization. He pointed out (incorrectly) that there were no antihomosexual laws in Illinois. His comments provoked a loud, jocular, off-the-record jest from a central leader of the party: "That's because Daley is a homo!" It is not insignificant or beside the point that such a joke could be shouted out without a second thought.

Knowing this helps in grasping the context in which Comrade Britton presented his report. It adds dimension to the understanding of how the policy was able to originate and evolve for a decade. It should also help to temper discussion of the negative influences the gay liberation movement has had on the party. (That is, I do not consider it a wrong and dangerous adaptation to counterculturalism that party leaders no longer go around telling queer jokes.)

At the time Comrade Britton presented the policy to the National Committee for discussion and approval it was not at all uncommon to hear motivation for the policy that was at odds with what Comrade Britton presented. This is partly what Comrade Jack Barnes referred to in the Memorandum on Membership Policy adopted by the PC Nov. 13, 1970, where he said the policy "breeds . . . misinterpretations . . . internally." For example, many comrades believed and argued that the reason for our policy was a conscious adaptation to the antihomosexual prejudices of workers. In reality, any such adaptation was *unconscious*, or, looked at another way, the result of the penetration of prejudice (the source of which was *not* workers, however strongly workers are prejudiced) into the party itself. The official, stated reason for the policy by the comrades with the central responsibility for administering the party, who developed the policy, was strictly along the lines of security—that homosexuals could be arrested or blackmailed and this allegedly could open the party itself to victimization.

But the understanding of many, many comrades was that we had to have such a policy because "workers hate queers." Another common reason, raised more by comrades who had been organizers or held other positions of major administrative responsibility, concerned the idea that homosexuals, if admitted, would seek to transmogrify the party from a combat organization into a refuge of homosexual happiness. This notion can be found in the Memorandum on Membership Policy by Comrade Barnes, although there it is carefully qualified—homosexuals "usually" go through crises, "some" homosexual comrades tried to change the party, and the problem is "not limited to homosexual comrades"—and, more importantly, there it is used to argue that the policy is not necessary, rather than the opposite.

The echoes of false ideas expressed in discussions of the policy three years ago still reverberate in the April 29, 1973, Memorandum on the Gay Liberation Movement.

Advising the YSA

In the spring of 1970, Comrades Nelson Blackstock and Helen Meyers went on national organizational/speaking tours for the YSA. They found considerable discontent with the policy in more than a few locals. Objection was strongest in locals that had actually experienced the loss of a homosexual member because of the policy, but there was also opposition from comrades who had only heard of the policy in branch plenum reports. This opposition made it obvious that the YSA would have to take up the question of barring homosexuals from mem-

bership, just as the party had taken it up.

(Actually, one of the factors that led to the party's taking up the issue was the educational intervention of a gay liberation organization at the 1969 YSA convention and in the preconvention discussion of the Twin Cities YSA local, which hosted the convention.)

The political collaboration of the YSA and SWP involves extensive consultation between the leaderships of the two organizations at all levels. In the early summer of 1970, Comrade Susan LaMont (who was then functioning as the National Chairwoman of the YSA, although Comrade Larry Seigle still formally held the post of National Chairman) requested advice from the party on how to handle the gay membership policy question. A series of meetings was initiated, involving Comrades Barnes, Britton, LaMont, and me. (I was involved because I was to draft and present the organizational report to the YSA NC plenum following the first Socialist Activists and Educational Conference.)

The 1970 YSA Plenum: A Trial Balloon

An edited transcript of the organizational report I presented to the YSA plenum was printed in the Sept. 2, 1970, *Young Socialist Organizer*. Comrade Barnes refers to it in the Nov. 13, 1970, Memorandum on Membership Policy, and the relevant section appears after this article as an appendix.

Leaving aside the irony (or hypocrisy, if you will) of the fact that a homosexual presented the arguments for excluding homosexuals from membership, there was a more important dishonesty involved in this report.

That is, the report was prepared with the idea that the policy being motivated would very probably be eliminated in the near future. Built into the motivation—for this very reason—was an "escape hatch" for changing the policy, and part of the reason for defending its continuation was to take a sounding of the YSA NC's attitude in order to check how urgently we needed to use that "escape hatch."

The "escape hatch," as it turned out, was never used. It had been the argument that the necessity for the policy depended on the existence of antihomosexual laws and a climate of opinion making it possible to enforce those laws—such that a shift in the climate or changes in the laws would mean we should get rid of the policy. The problem with the escape by this route was that it depended on affirming the past correctness of the policy.

A careful reading of the Memorandum on Membership Policy will reveal that, in reporting for the administrative committee, Comrades Barnes neither clearly affirmed the policy's past correctness, nor clearly said that it had always been wrong.

The reason for this ambiguity—for refraining from a forthright self-criticism and rejection of the policy as the penetration of bourgeois prejudice into the party (which is what it was)—must have lain in divisions within the PC. As one who is not privy to the content of PC discussions, I say this on belief, rather than on information. But I also believe a division in the PC was responsible for advising the YSA to reaffirm the policy, rather than to argue for its rejection. That is, the reason put forward at the time was that there was no time for the PC to discuss the policy prior to the YSA plenum. This meant that in light of the general consideration—which is correct—that it is best for the YSA, which looks to the revolution-

ary party for political leadership, to wait for the SWP's lead in questions affecting both organizations, the YSA should not go ahead and get rid of the policy. It was a thorny matter because the issue also could not be ignored until the party acted, given the ferment in the YSA over the policy. It seems that it would have warranted extraordinary effort to have the matter resolved by the PC before the YSA plenum, had this not been impossible because of opposition in the PC to changing the policy.

This would all be nothing more than water under the bridge except for the fact that *the failure to firmly reject the policy and declare that it had always been wrong has left the door open to continued errors*. Some of them are still embodied in the April 29, 1973, memorandum. Briefly, the mistake involved leads, on one hand, to a willingness to kowtow before prejudice, and, on the other, to a readiness to affront the dignity of homosexuals. In 1970 it was judged more important to cajole party leaders with the wrong position than to stop a practice that shut the party's doors to talented and dedicated potential cadres.

Good-bye Without Good Riddance

As mentioned above, the Nov. 13, 1970, Memorandum on Membership Policy takes an agnostic stand on the past rightness or wrongness of the policy. The concluding sections of the report on enforceability and misinterpretation strongly *imply* that the policy was always wrong. Comrade Barnes writes, for example, that the policy "is not really viable in that it creates more problems than it solves."

But Comrade Barnes also says, "Of course, we also know that with some newer members this [discomfort with the policy] is for the wrong reasons. It takes a little while for members, especially new members, to actually come to an understanding of what a revolutionary party is and what it cannot be." The "wrong reasons" are not spelled out, but one possible inference is that those who understand what the party is know that the policy was okay in the past. I don't believe the policy was ever okay. It is true, of course, that under conditions of severe repression—in a witchhunt, under a dictatorship, or if the party is illegal—things have to be tightened up, and some people who the party can use in more favorable circumstances will not match up to the task under such conditions. But I don't believe this is ever a question of a comrade's race, nationality, sex, sexual orientation, hair or eye color, etc. What we criticize the Communist Party for in connection with its suspension of its Japanese-American members in the 1940s is not only that it was done in deference to a spirit of jingoistic racism. We don't, I think, add qualifiers like, "Of course, in some circumstances a revolutionary party might have to ban members of racial minorities in order to protect its security." I don't believe underground organizations owing loyalty to the Fourth International in Hitler's Germany banned Jews from membership after the Nazi race laws were passed. Comrade Barnes implies that the "newer comrades" who were uncomfortable for the "wrong reasons" held some kind of moral objection to the policy. From the point of view of a "revolutionary morality" that defines what is acceptable in terms of what advances or stands in the way of the class struggle, no justification for the banning of homosexuals from party membership can

be found. The fact that the country was just barely coming out of McCarthyism when we began evolving toward the policy makes it *understandable*. It does not mean it was *correct*.

Adding further to the confusion is the earlier section falling between the second and third set of triple asterisks, on page 11, in *DB*, Vol. 31, No. 3. Here Comrade Barnes discusses court challenges to sodomy statutes, stands taken by bourgeois candidates, and other factors that *hint* at the originally projected escape route from the policy—that *suggest* a change in the climate of opinion may be behind the change. In fact, it was on this section that attention focused during the discussion of the issue at the December 1970 YSA convention. Even the NEC's reporter misplaced his emphasis on this section, rather than on the telling arguments in the concluding sections on enforceability and misinterpretation.

Nearly three years later there are comrades who still believe that the policy was once right, believing also then by implication that in some circumstances it could properly be reinstated. A clean end to the whole chapter of the membership policy is still needed.

The Two Probes: February, 1971—May 25, 1971, and May 25, 1971—August, 1971

Our probing of the gay liberation movement in 1971 did not begin with the passage of the Political Committee's May 25, 1971, motion (*DB*, Vol. 31, No. 3). Actually, that motion represented the beginning of a braking process that aimed at slowing down work begun four months earlier—a braking process that has culminated, two-and-a-half years later, in the Memorandum on the Gay Liberation Movement. Some leading comrades felt that our probing of the gay movement was "going too far." At one informal meeting, Comrade Barnes cautioned comrades getting involved in gay liberation against "going apeshit." The feedback that started hitting the center as reports were carried back from the mid-March NC plenum and as *The Militant* began reflecting our growing involvement in gay liberation signaled that at least a layer of comrades felt the party had gone "apeshit"—or was "going overboard on this gay thing." It was only under the impact of this feedback that the motion supposedly initiating the probe was assed by the PC. The effect of the motion—at least in New York—was to constrict the range of activity in which a number of comrades had already been involved since February.

The April 24 Gay Task Force

One of the first steps the party took toward changing its previous position of ignoring the gay liberation movement was the assigning of homosexual comrades (with our consent) to a gay workshop at the February, 1971, National Student Antiwar Conference sponsored by the Student Mobilization Committee in Washington, D. C. Comrade Larry Seigle headed up the party's fractional intervention into that student antiwar conference, and in consonance with decisions taken in the fraction, the party and YSA put their support behind a gay workshop proposal that the SMC initiate a Gay Task Force to build participation in gay contingents in the April 24, 1971, antiwar demonstrations in D. C. and San Francisco. The proposal was drawn up by Comrade John Lauritsen, then a party sympathizer and member of the Red Butterfly.

Comrade David Thorstad and I began to attend some meetings of groups such as the Christopher Street Liberation Day Committee and the Gay Activists Alliance. Originally, this was done in consultation with Comrades Barnes and Barry Sheppard. As more comrades became involved, direction of our activity moved to the New York local organizer, Comrade Lew Jones, and the New York branch organizers, Susan LaMont, Wendy Reissner, and Peter Seidman.

One main axis of our activity in these organizations was the building of support for the April 24 Gay Task Force and gay contingent. When those demonstrations took place two months later, the Washington gay contingent drew about 1,500. *The Militant* reported that the San Francisco gay contingent reached 2,000 by the end of the march, noting that this made it "the largest demonstration of gays ever held in the West" up to that time and calling it "among the most vocal and spirited" contingents in the action.

(In the 1971 preconvention discussion period Comrade Hedda Garza charged that participants in the D. C. gay contingent had fondled each other and made a disgusting spectacle of themselves. She also made some charges about the party being turned into a "conversion school for lesbians" and a "haven or hospital" for "Gay people and man-haters." Somehow Comrade Garza's charges regarding the party—which were as groundless as her charges regarding the gay antiwar contingent—seem to have influenced Point 5 of the April 29, 1973, Memorandum on the Gay Liberation Movement.)

Christopher Street

But the Gay Task Force was not the only project we worked on during the first probe. Comrades were assigned to work in the Christopher Street Liberation Day Committee in New York well before the Political Committee adopted its motion of May 25, 1971. Of course, they continued their work after the motion was adopted. There was a major party intervention, mainly geared to sales of our press, at the 1971 gay pride action in New York. The July 2, 1971, *Militant* carried a major article, "Homosexuality: Fact Versus Myth," directed toward the gay pride demonstrators. Attention was called to this article by a frontpage headline.

The Militant

The article in *The Militant* sold at the Christopher Street action was part two of what was originally projected—in a meeting of the administrative committee, Comrade Mary-Alice Waters, Comrade Thorstad, and me—as a series of three feature articles. However, it was pointed out—and emphasized by Comrade Waters—that this series would be a trial balloon, would not be projected in print as a series, would be spaced apart, and might not be completed. It was not completed, as it turned out. Part three, dealing with the Judeo-Christian tradition and homosexual oppression, was never run—even though it had been approved by the administrative committee and edited by Comrade Sheppard. However, it was not clearly stated that the decision not to run it had been reached until postponements had been dragged out for more than six months. The first article in the series appeared in the April 16, 1971, *Militant*. Entitled, "On the Nature of Gay Oppression," it represents the kind of article that would not be submitted to *The Militant* if the Memorandum on Gay

Liberation stands as party policy. But it was an extremely useful article, and it has been widely reproduced, both nationally and internationally. It was used as the basis for an article this year by our cothinkers in New Zealand for sales at the gay pride actions there.

In addition to these articles, *The Militant* carried reviews and news articles on gay liberation that were prominently featured and illustrated with photographs. (And, as a matter of interest for those who are afraid gays will give the party a freaky appearance, the April 16 issue of *The Militant*, sold the week before April 24, that carried the frontpage headline, "ALL OUT APRIL 24!" needed a picture of a mass demonstration for the cover—and the one used was a photo of the March 14 gay action in Albany, N. Y. Since the photo was not identified as such, however, there was no way to tell what it was.)

The Austin Conference, Forums, and the Albany Action

Before the May 25, 1971, motion was adopted by the PC, I was assigned to attend and report on a national gay conference in Austin, Texas, in March, 1971. I worked with comrades from the Austin branch in intervening at that conference to seek support for the April 24 antiwar march. At the YSA's national movement center in the D. C. branch headquarters after the April 24 demonstration, one of the programs features was a panel discussion on gay liberation involving Comrades Thorstad and Terry Hillman, John Lauritsen of Red Butterfly, Franklin Kameny of Washington, D. C., Mattachine, and Tina Mandel of Daughters of Bilitis. (Kameny and Mandel were the gay speakers at the antiwar action.)

At a regional YSA educational conference at New York University in May 1971, Comrades Steve Beren, Kipp Dawson, David Thorstad, and I spoke on "Why Marxists Support Gay Liberation." I believe each of us said things then that would now be considered "going beyond" what is representative of the party's position. The same, I think, was true of the comrades' presentations at the April 24 panel. I know for certain that when Comrade Hillman and I traveled to Philadelphia to take part in a forum on the same topic after the May 25 motion was adopted, we were careful to censor things we had said in the earlier programs out of our talks. Also after the motion, a tentative proposal to make an article for the *International Socialist Review* out of the NYU panel was junked.

Through our participation in gay organizations and our news coverage in *The Militant*, we made a real effort to build a statewide demonstration against antigay laws in Albany, N. Y., on March 14, 1971. The action was organized around the demand for extending civil rights protection to homosexuals in the areas of employment, housing, and public accommodations, and the demand to repeal sodomy, solicitation, loitering, and cross-dressing laws. Approximately 1,200 people took part in the action. Among the speakers was Kate Millet. The demonstration coincided with the SWP NC plenum.

The March 1971 Plenum

The braking process represented by the May 25, 1971, PC motion, the constriction of our gay liberation work, the tapering off of *Militant* coverage, the decline in forums on the subject—all of this seems to have come as a reaction against what had been done up to that time. And

the reaction—the opposition—seems to have crystallized around the March 1971 SWP NC plenum.

There is considerable documentary evidence of the wholehearted, enthusiastically positive attitude toward the gay liberation movement that existed around the time of the plenum. The attitude from February up through the plenum was genuinely one of welcoming and embracing this new movement. *Internal Information Bulletin* No. 2 in 1971 (April, 1971) contains the Youth Report to SWP National Committee Plenum, March 15, 1971, by Frank Boehm.

A rather lengthy section of Comrade Boehm's report—as printed—deals with gay liberation. It can be found on page 29 of the bulletin, beginning with: "Hundreds of gay organizations have sprung up on the campuses all across the country. This movement is bringing the rage of millions of homosexuals who are—and have been for thousands of years—brutalized and murdered out of the closets and into the streets." The report before editing spent even more time on gay liberation. The paragraph that is printed referring to "various actions being planned in local or regional areas against political oppression of homosexuals, such as yesterday's action in Albany. . . ." was delivered as an enthusiastic report on the previous day's demonstration.

One NC member, who may have been part of the feedback the national office afterward reacted to, explained to me how Boehm's report had startled him and how it had gotten his back up, being confronted with something that seemed to have been smuggled in via the youth report—viz., the projection of gay liberation as an important area of activity for the Trotskyist movement. Actually, of course, this was no trick by the party leadership but simply a result of the YSA chairman's enthusiasm.

But while Comrade Boehm may have, in Comrade Barnes' words, gone a little "apeshit," Comrade Barnes himself was not unenthusiastic. His report on the 1971 draft resolution contained numerous references to gay liberation, including a reference to the fact that the number of gay workers is in the millions, not merely the thousands. A comparison of the report as it appeared in the *Discussion Bulletin*, Vol. 29, No. 1, with the way it appeared in the *International Socialist Review* and in the pamphlet, *A Revolutionary Strategy for the '70s: Documents of the Socialist Workers Party* reveals that some of Comrade Barnes's more exuberant phrases also bit the editorial-pencil dust in moving from internal to external publication. But even as his report appeared in the *ISR* and the pamphlet, its treatment of gay liberation contrasts starkly with the April 29, 1973, memorandum. Also contrasting with the memorandum is Comrade Gus Horowitz's introduction to *Towards an American Socialist Revolution*, written in the same general time period.

After the plenum there came a discernible pulling back from what was suddenly seen as having been an overboard involvement in the gay movement. The May 25, 1971, PC motion was part of this pullback. The motion suggested to those of us involved in the probe for the first time that there was some question about the party's ultimate intervention into the gay liberation movement. Given the fact that activity up to that point had provoked a reaction from leaders of the party in the center and around the country, such a pullback was not at all unjustified. But the central party leadership then had the

responsibility to lead the party forward on this issue, and it has defaulted in that responsibility. Both the literary discussion and the April 29, 1973, memorandum testify to that. Both are at odds with the general understanding at the time of the 1971 convention that the ending of the probe would be coupled with an effort to "bring the party along."

The Gay Workshops at the 1971 Convention

In retrospect it appears that a decisive turn away from the initial enthusiasm about gay liberation occurred in the period between the plenum and the convention in 1971. For whatever reasons, the gay liberation movement seems to have been reassessed as an episodic and not-too-important phenomenon. The main attention shifted from the gay movement itself to its impact on the internal life of the party. I say this *appears* to be the case. I cannot read minds and I have no knowledge of what discussions occurred in the administrative committee or Political Committee bearing on this shift. But if one looks at the steps that have been taken since the 1971 convention with the understanding that the central leadership's main concern was to curb what they saw as negative effects on the party's internal life and that this concern was wedded to a misreading of the gay movement as a mainly counter-cultural phenomenon, then all of the moves make sense.

The ostensible purpose of the two workshops on gay liberation held at the 1971 convention was to draw together the information from the probe. A quick glance at the summary of the workshop discussions published in *Internal Information Bulletin* No. 3 in 1971 will reveal that they were largely unsuccessful as sources of much substantive information. But they were successful in another respect. They achieved the support of the majority of participants for the NC's proposal to end the probe and enter a literary discussion on the party's orientation. Now, the understanding was, "the leadership will lead"—"We have to bring the party along."

The Literary Discussion

The essential problem in the literary discussion—reflective of the central party leadership's apparent aim to simultaneously justify *both its earlier estimate of gay liberation and its retreat from that position*—can best be seen by reviewing Comrade Sheppard's article, "Concerning the Discussion" (*DB*, Vol. 30, No. 8), which served as the basis for the April 29, 1973, Memorandum on Gay Liberation.

Comrade Sheppard's article: (1) noted and answered some countercultural and utopian notions raised in the discussion, at the same time confusing this trend with the separate issue of the need for the party to make a clearcut rejection of antihomosexual "theories" used to justify gay oppression; (2) replied to criticism of the leadership's estimation of gay liberation implied in the contributions of Comrades Nat Weinstein and Roland Sheppard (Ironically, Comrade Barry Sheppard disputed here arguments very close to those now put forward in the memorandum.); (3) alleged that his view of gay oppression and the struggle to end it was *essentially* no different from that of Comrades Thorstad and Michael Maggi (who stressed the revolutionary, anticapitalist dynamic of gay liberation); and (4) used the lack of a national focus in

the gay movement as the major reason for not undertaking an active, partywide intervention.

My opinion at the time was that Comrade Sheppard's article set the stage for the adoption of an orientation aggressively championing gay liberation. In retrospect, looked at in light of the memorandum and in the context of the whole braking process, it is clear that his arguments pointed in a different direction.

The Memorandum

In his literary discussion article, Comrade Barry Sheppard chided Comrades Weinstein and Roland Sheppard for appearing to favor the relegation of the party's stand in behalf of gay rights to "a file marked 'positions adopted but better forgotten.'" Now the memorandum asks the whole party to approve relegating our position to such a file.

Last year Comrade Sheppard wrote: "We must not confuse the question of what may be necessary for the taking of power by the workers, and the program of the vanguard party that intends to lead not only the taking of power, but the mobilization of the working class and its allies in the historic task of rebuilding society from top to bottom, eliminating every vestige of discrimination and oppression spawned by class society. And, while power will be taken by the working class around the most burning issues of the class struggle, which are *part* of our full program, power is much more likely to be taken by the working class to the extent that it succeeds in mobilizing the widest layers of the oppressed, convincing them by its deeds that the taking of power by the working class will in fact end all forms of oppression." (Original emphasis.)

This year the memorandum states: "The major issues we should be concentrating on are the big questions of the class struggle, and this must be reflected in the totality of the party's projection of its program. It would be a mistake to place equal emphasis upon the struggle of women or Blacks, and that of gay people, for example." (Never has the party ever come close to placing "equal emphasis" on the struggles of Blacks and women with that of gays. But in 1971—before the May 25 PC motion—it did place *some* emphasis on this struggle.)

Last year Comrade Sheppard wrote: "The gay liberation movement does not have the potential mass of either the women's movement or the movements of the major oppressed nationalities, nor the social weight of these movements, which results both from their mass and the scope of the questions they raise. The gay liberation movement clearly does not raise such a central question of world politics as the antiwar movement does. In our long-term strategic priorities, then, it is certainly more peripheral to the central issues of the class struggle than either the women's movement or the movements of the oppressed nationalities, or the struggle against imperialist wars. *But this estimate of relative proportions and priorities does not negate the significance of the movement for us.*" (Emphasis added.)

This year the memorandum states: "In our long-term strategic priorities, the gay liberation movement is much more peripheral to the central issues of the class struggle than either the women's movement or the movements of the oppressed nationalities. Neither does it raise such a central issue of world politics as the struggle against impe-

rialist wars." the "but" clause I emphasized from last August has disappeared this spring. A side-by-side comparison of the article and the memorandum will show a distinct shift away from the estimate made even a year ago.

Moreover, even last year's approach was put forward in the context of a two-year pullback from any but the most peripheral involvement in the gay movement. The gay memorandum proposes a ratification of this retreat and abstention—which was originally proposed as a *temporary* stepping back while we held the literary discussion. The discussion that was supposed to "bring the party along" has instead been used to hold the party back vis-a-vis gay liberation. Now the memorandum proposes freezing that stance as our *permanent* orientation to the gay movement.

I believe there is a chilling note of intimidation in the memorandum as well. Point number 5 of the memorandum, coming in the context of a whole document that deemphasizes and plays down the gay movement as mainly a countercultural thing providing social services on campus—with "notable exceptions"—can be inferred as a warning or a threat to gay comrades. Homosexuals pose no danger—just because they are homosexuals—of making the party appear "exotic," and a discussion of freaky appearance and behavior would have better been placed elsewhere than in a document on gay liberation. Moreover, in this use of the word "exotic" and in references to all-women's parties that smack of things written by Comrade Hedda Garza in 1971, there is another unheal-

thy aspect. It was Comrade Weinstein, in his concern for the workers who are too tired to think about sex, who used the word "exotic" in the literary discussion. The memorandum's use of this word and its deemphasis of the movement carry in them faint echoes of the old argument used to justify the membership policy: "Workers hate queers."

Coming at a time when the party is preparing a turn toward mass propaganda and probing opportunities within the labor movement, these echoes suggest that this wrong and backward idea about workers' prejudices still has not been stamped out.

The correct attitude on the prejudices of workers is set forth in the document that ought to be chosen by the party to stand in place of the memorandum, "For an Intervention Into the Gay Liberation Struggle" by David Thorstad and Kendall Green. Thorstad and Green state: "The American working class, which will take upon its shoulders the task of transforming and directing the whole social order, can and will ally with all the progressive enemies of capitalism, put aside its prejudices to forge such alliances, and ultimately overcome those prejudices as it begins the evolution toward communist humanity."

An orientation to generally assigning comrades to work in the gay liberation movement, and placing this work under national party direction does not exaggerate the importance of this movement, nor will it turn away workers from the SWP. Our work in the winter and spring of 1971 should be the guide to our orientation now.

July 18, 1973

Recently, with the rise of the radicalization and in particular influenced by the women's liberation movement, many homosexuals have begun to organize into groups to fight against the persecution and discrimination they suffer in this society. It is only with the rise of the gay liberation movement that many comrades have become aware of a policy of some ten years standing proscribing homosexuals from membership in the YSA. Because this policy was adopted by a decision in the National Executive Committee for security purposes after some concrete experiences which pointed up the need for such a policy, and, as such, never came up for any formal discussion in the organization outside of the NEC—and because many comrades only learned of the policy recently, and because of the increased frequency with which it has become a question—there is an understandable confusion among many comrades about the policy. The NEC has decided that because it has come up and we can expect it to come up some more, we have a responsibility to discuss and explain the policy to the plenum.

I am going to spend a little time to, first of all, clarify what our position and our policy is, and to explain the origin and motivate the reasons for the policy. If we are going to discuss the question here, and if we are going to be confronted with people attacking our organization and asking for a justification of the policy in the local areas, as we already are, it is crucial to place the discussion on the proper political axis.

In order to do that, it is necessary to abstract the discussion from any prejudices which may exist within the organization, or within the working class or any other sector of society. We know that sexual prejudice is perhaps the most deep-seated kind of prejudice internalized in members of this class society, as evidenced by the sweeping psychological repercussions of the women's liberation movement. But we do not adopt or discuss political policy on the basis of backward prejudice. As Marxists and revolutionaries, we support the personal freedom and privacy of every individual. From our standpoint, the efforts of the state to regulate and punish personal sexual behavior is absurd and reactionary. We are for the widest possible enlargement of human freedom, including the freedom of the individual to do whatever he or she chooses that does not injure or interfere with anyone else's freedom.

Thus, we unconditionally oppose the oppression of homosexuals and support their fight to end that oppression. This is a separate question from the membership question. Our membership policy is a security policy.

The laws against homosexual behavior combined with the social climate which makes it possible for the ruling class to enforce those laws mean that allowing homosexuals to hold membership in our organization would subject us to victimization. It must be understood that were there no laws against it, or were the social climate such that enforcement were impossible, as say, the enforcement of the laws against fornication, then the policy would be changed. However, while these hypothetical conditions may obtain at some point in the future—at which time we would have to review the policy—they do not obtain now. This is the reason for the policy and while the reason remains, so does the policy.

The policy was not adopted on the basis of speculation. It was adopted simultaneously by the Socialist Workers Party and the YSA around ten years ago as a result of concrete experience. Up until then, our movement had never had any policy on the question. It was, as I said earlier, initiated by the National Offices of both the YSA and SWP.

While the policy is, as comrades can see, precisely the same kind of policy as the drug policy from the organization's point of view, it is, of course, quite different from the individual's point of view. A person can quit using drugs, but a person cannot give up one's sexuality. But while there is a cruel aspect to this from the individual's point of view and an unfortunate one for the movement, too, we must also keep in mind what it means to be allied with the combat party. In one sense, the policy also protects the individual as well as the movement. Someone who might never be troubled outside of the movement would be far more subject to persecution, blackmail, arrest, etc., as a member. The ruling class measures us against a different set of criteria than they use for the labor bureaucracy, or the social democracy, for example. Things they will be inclined to let go by with the others, in our case they will use to nail us. We cannot operate as we would—or will—in a workers state, existing, as we do today, under combat conditions as *the* revolutionary opposition to the ruling class.

THE INTERNATIONALIST TENDENCY AND GAY LIBERATION—
WHAT IS THE I. T. UP TO?

by David Keepnews, Upper West Side Branch, New York Local

The discussion of gay liberation in the Internationalist Tendency's political counterresolution, *The Building of a Revolutionary Party in Capitalist America*, might at first appear startling. In reading this section of its counterresolution, however, its real intentions become clear.

The I. T. makes it clear that it applies its generally conservative approach to gay liberation as well, which should surprise no one. But after concluding that this struggle "warrants only a low priority," it goes on to state:

". . . the party leadership has had an extremely demagogic attitude. After upholding the backward policy of excluding gays from membership in the party, we have witnessed the baiting of comrades with allegedly anti-gay prejudices, the subordination of differences on the gay question within the party majority leadership, and the removal of the whole dispute to a literary discussion artificially separated from the pre-convention discussion.

". . . The lack of any analysis and empiricism of the leadership caused scandalous treatment of gay comrades. First they were the new 'big mass movement,' and then they were locked back in the closet to hide the differences within the leadership" (p. 22).

I want to make plain at the outset that I am strongly of the opinion that the party's handling of the question of its relationship to gay liberation *has* been in many respects horrendous. Further, I am dead-set against what is currently being proposed in the National Committee Memorandum on the Gay Liberation Movement as regards an orientation toward the gay liberation struggle. More than a few comrades share my opinions on this subject.

In reality, however, it is the fact that there *is* disagreement and dissatisfaction within the party over this question—and *that fact alone*—that causes the I. T. to even bother raising this question. This is among the crassest examples of the I. T.'s basic approach toward the current discussion within our movement.

Its approach is one of taking gripes and grievances over any number of areas of work in which the party has (or has not) been involved and attempting to build a tendency around those gripes. Thus the I. T. takes grievances about trade-union work, Black work, Puerto Rican work, etc., and tries to weave them into something political. It attempts to provide a backdrop, a political motif. The comrades of the I. T. are aware that there are disagreements over the party's orientation toward the gay liberation movement—differences which exist among supporters of the party's present political line. In attempting to raise a few grievances themselves about this question, the I. T. is only making an effort to exploit these differences to its own advantage—that is, to try and add another link in its chain of complaints and perhaps win some more support that way.

The use of this approach as regards gay liberation is new, and comes only as sharp disagreements among the party majority itself come into view. The Proletarian Orientation Tendency, of which Comrade Bill Massey—currently the major leader of the I. T.—was a central leader,

said during the 1971 preconvention discussion that "the publication of page after page on the plight of homosexuals" constituted "crass adaptation to the petty-bourgeois milieu." ("For a Proletarian Orientation," *SWP Discussion Bulletin*, Vol. 29, No. 2, p. 33.) Comrade Hedda Garza, a major spokeswoman for the I. T. and its debater in some of the East Coast branches, took on an hysterical tone in her horrified discussion of gay liberation during the 1971 preconvention discussion. She charged, among other things, that the party was being turned into "a conversion school for lesbians" and expressed shock at the gay contingent for the April 24, 1971, antiwar demonstration, which she charged put on an "en masse off-Broadway show for the local gentry," having "freely fondled each other in a most intimate style." (*SWP Discussion Bulletin*, Vol. 29, No. 9, p. 20-21.)

This year, these comrades and their tendency are putting things differently. They mention with scorn "upholding the backward policy of excluding gays from membership in the party." The comrades who now compose the I. T., of course, can hardly claim any credit in getting rid of this policy—this was accomplished by nothing short of the gay liberation movement itself. This year, they discuss what constitutes the "scandalous treatment of gay comrades" that allegedly went hand in hand with the decision to pull back from the party's originally enthusiastic appraisal of gay liberation and to end activity in the movement. Comrade Garza referred to this in the Upper West Side branch discussion as "one of the cruellest things the party did." They go so far as to say that gay comrades have been "locked back in the closet."

Although I *am* in strong disagreement with the party's handling of gay liberation, I am not nearly as concerned with what Comrade Garza and her tendency call "cruelty" as with *political mistakes*. And on gay liberation, the I. T. makes the same error as the NC Memorandum: the I. T. counterresolution, in words similar to those of the Memorandum, concludes that the gay movement "warrants only a low priority"—i.e., warrants no direct intervention. On this particular point, supporters of the Memorandum are in essential agreement with the sectarianism of the I. T.

The approach of the I. T. is only too obvious as regards the gay liberation movement—or, perhaps it would be more accurate to say, as regards the justifiably disgruntled gay comrades whom it would like to drag into its orbit. This has not got the first thing to do with principled politics. Far from it—it is merely an attempt to turn some dissatisfaction over one question into support to the I. T. It is just a matter of trying to exploit this area of disagreement to add a little more bulk to this tendency.

Moreover, in spite of the I. T.'s "new style," the content of its attitude toward homosexuality and gay liberation does not appear to have evolved much. In the Upper West Side discussion, for instance, Comrade Garza had the audacity and insensitivity to assert that during the brief period in 1971 when the party was moving toward embracing gay liberation it was the "in thing"—a "badge

of honor"—to announce that one was gay—even if one was not. *Nowhere*—not in the SWP or anywhere else—has this ever been the case. In saying differently, Comrade Garza showed a total lack of understanding of gay oppression; more than standing reality on its head, she was broadcasting her contempt for homosexuals. Remarks such as those of I.T. representative Garza render these comrades' crocodile tears over "cruel acts," "scandalous treatment of gay comrades" and similar complaints, less than convincing.

I do not think that their ploy will work. As a supporter of both the general line of the Political Committee draft political resolution and the counterresolution on gay liberation, *For an Intervention into the Gay Liberation Struggle* by Thorstad and Green, I sincerely hope that it will not work. Comrades who may find themselves in any kind of agreement with some of the I.T.'s gripes about the gay liberation movement should give some serious consideration as to what side of its mouth the I.T. is really speaking out of.

July 21, 1973

LETTER TO LEW JONES

July 21, 1973
Los Angeles, Calif.

NEW YORK

Lew Jones
SWP National Office

Dear Lew,

As I mentioned to Barry and Jack at the time of our recent plenum, I think that the question of our orientation toward the gay liberation movement should be placed on the agenda of the convention as a separate point. I am even more convinced at this time that it should be a separate point on the agenda.

I think it would be a mistake to have a discussion on our orientation toward the gay liberation movement under the political report just as it would have been a mistake not to have had a separate point at the plenum. There are two reasons for this. One, because I think it would cut across having a genuine full discussion of the political report as a whole. And two, it would not allow for a full discussion of our orientation toward the gay liberation movement, which I think is absolutely essential. It is obvious to me that dozens of comrades do not sup-

port the National Committee's Memorandum on the Gay Liberation Movement and that a number of comrades support the counterresolution by Comrades Thorstad and Green. In addition to that there is a large layer of comrades that are simply confused about what our orientation should be and what the memorandum means.

I would urge that the Political Committee propose to the preconvention plenum that the question of our orientation toward the gay liberation movement be placed on the agenda as a separate point. As one of the comrades in the party who has come to the conclusion that I could not support the Memorandum on the Gay Liberation Movement but instead agree with the counterresolution by Green and Thorstad, I would like to see this question discussed fully. If the comrades on the Political Committee do not agree with my proposal I intend to present a motion to this effect at the preconvention plenum.

Comradely,
s/Charlie Bolduc,
Los Angeles

PS: Please publish this letter in the preconvention discussion bulletin. The reason for this is because I want other comrades in the party to know my view on this question prior to the convention.