

# International Internal Discussion Bulletin

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# The Issues Before the World Trotskyist Movement

Report to the Socialist Activists and Educational Conference on August 18, 1972

By Jack Barnes

[The following report was given at the Socialist Activists and Educational Conference on August 18, 1972.]

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The leadership of the Socialist Workers Party believes that the Fourth International is at a turning point in its history. Never has it had such opportunities. At the same time it faces a fundamental obstacle to fully realizing these opportunities. The problem comes from a deepening and extension of the erroneous political course embarked upon by the majority of the leadership of the International at the last world congress.

The plenary meeting of the SWP National Committee in May discussed this situation at length. The object of today's report is to acquaint the comrades of the Socialist Workers Party and the Young Socialist Alliance with the party leadership's view of the fundamental outlines of this current conjuncture in the International. We hope to accomplish one main task: to get you interested in and prepared for the discussion whose pace will pick up as we get closer to the next world congress of the Fourth International, where fundamental decisions will have to be made on the key political questions facing our world movement.

The Socialist Workers Party, as you know, is barred from membership in the Fourth International by the laws in this country. But we consider ourselves part of the world Trotskyist movement and are in complete solidarity with the Fourth International. We follow the evolution and development of the International with great interest.

The objective conditions we face on a world scale have been presented in previous lectures here. Given the depth of the radicalization on a world scale, and the incapacity of Stalinism, Social Democracy, and currents such as Castroism to lead revolutionary upsurges through to success, new forces by the thousands are looking for leadership and can be won to our international movement. At the same time, since the last world congress, the line of the majority of the central leadership of the International has undergone a regressive evolution. It has adapted more and more to ultraleftism. This adaptation itself has become, in our opinion, a major obstacle to taking advantage of these new opportunities.

This adaptation began with a turn at the last world congress on the question of guerrilla warfare in Latin America, and, in the eyes of most comrades, in only a single country, Bolivia. The adaptation has since extended beyond Latin America and marks to one degree

or another the line proposed for countries like India, Ireland, and Britain. The error of defending guerrilla warfare as a strategy has now been deepened into the beginning of a defense of terrorism. Especially in two countries in Latin America, Bolivia and Argentina, the leadership of the International has failed in its responsibility to criticize the clear errors that have resulted from the substitution of the guerrilla warfare line for the method outlined in the Transitional Program and the Leninist strategy of party building. This adaptation has aided in deepening the errors in Argentina and Bolivia. This is compounded by the leadership's holding back of full information, particularly about Argentina. As a result, the international movement as a whole is not in the best possible position to redress these errors.

Our goal is not to solve these problems here but to lay them out and begin equipping ourselves to deal with them politically.

I would like to put the discussion within the International in the framework of the evolution of the world situation in the last year, because the problems and opportunities we face can not be isolated from this framework. The International is not turned inward, arguing about secondary questions during an ebb in the class struggle. The debate is over the biggest questions facing the world working class in a period of rising opportunities. The question is: Which way forward for the socialist revolution that lies ahead?

## The Meaning of the Summits

The past year has been dominated politically by the summit meetings held by Nixon with the Moscow and Peking overlords. This summitry is at the center of a new world situation opening up before us.

Comrades may be familiar with the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*. On the masthead of this magazine, which is edited by liberals, there is a little clock with the hands advancing toward midnight. Midnight is the hour of the nuclear conflagration. The editors move the hands backward or forward depending on what's happening in the world. After the arms agreement signed by Nixon and Brezhnev in Moscow, they moved the clock hands back two or three minutes. But they have made a fundamental error. Many other observers make exactly the same mistake. By capitulating to the nuclear armed imperialist rulers you do not satisfy them, you embolden them, you convince them that the course of aggression pays.

The biggest victim has been Vietnam. Moscow and Peking have dealt a blow to the Vietnamese revolution; they have increased the price the Vietnamese masses must pay; they have lengthened the imperialist intervention; and they have eliminated, to a large degree, the key obstacle staying the hands of the imperialists there. We have often talked about the imperialist rulers' fear of what the response from Moscow and Peking might be if they went too far in Vietnam. That fear prevented them from bombing close to the Chinese border, bombing the dikes, mining Haiphong, or using tactical nuclear weapons. At one time, these things *were* precluded because of their fear of what Moscow or Peking might do. But no longer. The North American capitalists have discovered that Moscow and Peking will not respond, and none of these options is precluded any more.

This has had a demoralizing effect on a layer of militants around the world who are partisans of the Vietnamese revolution. They have drawn the obvious conclusion: they cannot depend on Peking and Moscow, those two massive powers who have refused to stand by them in their revolutionary struggle.

The Washington-Peking-Moscow summitry has deeply affected the American antiwar movement. Remember what happened after Washington responded to the advancing NLF offensive by mining Haiphong. At first, all signs pointed to a deep and spontaneous reaction, deeper than the one that broke out after the invasion of Cambodia. You could feel it in the size of the initial demonstrations; or sense it in the faces of the politicians and commentators on television, who recognized that the imperialists were heading for the showdown; you could sense their fear and even their initial opposition. And then came the realization that there would be no showdown, that the imperialists were going to get away with it completely, that Moscow and Peking had capitulated. A worldwide deal was on. The bottom dropped out of the mass protests.

Mao and Brezhnev have also dealt a big blow to the Arab revolution. I was glad to see the strong article on this in *The Militant* [August 11, 1972]. It is becoming clearer to the Arab masses that they will get only very qualified help from Moscow in the struggle against Israel. In fact, it has come out that the Soviet bureaucracy itself has prevented Egypt from gaining anything close to military parity with the Israelis. One of the most revealing statements was made by Moshe Dayan a week after the removal of the Soviet equipment from Egypt. He said, essentially, "This changes one basic thing. In the last war, there were certain areas of Egypt and certain things that were precluded from us because of our fear of conflict with the Soviet pilots and technicians. Now there is not an area of the Arab world that is not open for retribution if we see fit." That shows what the summit meetings mean for the world revolution. We were correct in comparing them to the Stalin-Hitler pact and the Stalin-Laval pact.

But, after having said all this about the reality of the situation, we must also say that the present summit deals take place in a different context from that of the time of the Stalin-Hitler pact. The Stalin-Hitler pact, which opened the door to the Second World War, followed the defeat of the Second Chinese revolution, the crushing of the German workers and the rise of fascism in Europe,

the defeat of the Spanish revolution, and the consolidation of the Stalinist monolith as trial after trial crushed and silenced one oppositionist after another. The world situation is quite different today.

The end of World War II brought a new rise of the colonial revolution. There was the victory in China. Then came the victory in Cuba. Even with the defeats and setbacks, the world revolution is not in a basic downswing. The negative effects of the betrayals of Moscow and Peking fall within this framework, not the framework of crushing defeat of the world working class and its retreat.

The betrayals also take place in the framework of continued erosion of the capitalist system on a world scale. Vietnam itself is the clearest proof of this. There are growing limits to the capacity of the imperialists to police the world and stop the colonial revolution. The working masses of the advanced capitalist countries increasingly lack confidence in their rulers, who are incapable of providing the quality of life they are demanding. We have come to the end of a gigantic post-World War II boom. Illusions of full employment, stable prices, and permanent economic domination by the imperialists are fading. The national bourgeoisie in the semicolonies, taking advantage of this situation, haggles with the American imperialists over what percentage of the cut they will get.

At the heart of the Moscow-Peking betrayal is the utopian fallacy of peaceful coexistence; that is, the myth that an agreement between Washington and the bureaucracies of Moscow and Peking can halt the world revolution. In truth the world revolution is inspired by a great subversive: capitalism on a world scale. Control of this world revolution is not in the hands of the Moscow and Peking bureaucracies. It's in the hands of the oppressed nations and the colonial countries, the opposition in the workers states, and the workers, oppressed nationalities, small farmers, militant women, and radicalized youth in all the advanced countries.

No power on earth, no deal of any kind between Moscow and Peking and Washington can guarantee the status quo. The very development and decadence of capitalism breeds revolution.

## The New Rise of the World Revolution

A year ago, at our SWP convention, we noted that we had moved from a period where the key to world politics was the war in Vietnam to a new period where the direct and indirect consequences of Vietnam on the different sectors of the world revolution were becoming more and more important. That evolution continues.

We see no reason to revise our estimate of the basic changes that took place in the world in 1968 with the new radicalization, including a radicalization in the advanced countries, and the increased tempo of political life. There are growing conflicts and contradictions within the world capitalist economy, including the U. S. economy, epitomized by Nixon's wage-freeze and international economic counteroffensive, announced the day after our convention ended last summer. We're now going through a period where, under these pressures, the imperialists have to test the powers of resistance of their own working class, as they are doing in Britain and France, and

as they must do more and more in the U. S.

Tony Thomas outlined the current stage of the colonial revolution in his talk earlier in the week. [SWP Discussion Bulletin, Vol. 31, No. 5] Despite all the blows against it and all the defections of its allies, the colonial revolution moves stubbornly ahead, with the courageous Vietnamese still in the vanguard.

In regard to the political revolution in the workers states, which Gus Horowitz talked about yesterday ["The Struggle Against Bureaucracy in the Soviet Bloc," *ISR*, December 1972], we have a qualitatively different picture from that which existed at the end of the 1930s. Unlike Stalin at the height of his omnipotence, the bureaucracies do not seem so powerful that no forces dare rise against them. Just the opposite is true inside the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. We see a shift in the relationship of forces—*toward* the workers and their allies, *against* the bureaucracy, which finds it increasingly difficult to simply use naked force to crush the masses. We see a closer inter-relationship between the political revolution and the other sectors of the world revolution—the rise of the national movements, the youth radicalization, the question of alienation, etc. And I suspect we'll see growing evidence of the emergence of a women's liberation movement.

What's most important to note is the broad interconnection among these three sectors of the world revolution. What happens in one sector—in the advanced countries or the colonial countries or the workers states—affects all the others. This growing interconnection comes from the development of capitalism on a world scale and the international struggle against it. It becomes more and more obvious that any serious revolutionary force intent on overthrowing the capitalists in the advanced countries, or imperialism and the national bourgeoisies in the colonial countries, or the bureaucratic overlords in the deformed and degenerated workers states has to be based on an internationalist program. You must have an accurate analysis of the world situation in order to understand the reality in your own country.

We have a good example in our own experience on the question of Vietnam. Where would we have been with an incorrect understanding of the war in Vietnam? How could we have responded so effectively?

A very important process is taking place on the level of leadership of the world revolution. The traditional alternatives bidding for the allegiance of the masses have suffered blows in the recent period. The biggest blow has been dealt to Stalinism. The Nixon-Brezhnev deal has further undermined Moscow's pretenses to revolutionary leadership. Although a big price is paid as this process unfolds.

The degree of degeneration of the Moscow Stalinists is shown by the way their pupils in this country try to defend them. A recent issue of *Party Affairs*, an internal publication of the Communist Party, tries to explain the Nixon-Brezhnev deal. It contains a speech by James Jackson, the international affairs secretary of the American Communist Party, given on his recent return from Moscow. Jackson tries to explain the relationship between the Soviet Union, the world working class and the Chinese revolution. He begins by getting right down to the basic point:

"The Soviet Union is something else. It is the most historic achievement of the world working class. It is the prime generator in which all the forces of social progress on a world scale and each of the components of the world revolutionary process, of necessity, relates to, is plugged into.

"But in Peking, the common ground of the 'odd couple,' Mao and Nixon, is anti-Sovietism. They are united by common hatred of the Soviet Union. A popular metaphor of Mao Tse-tung is the phrase of 'golden bridge.' . . . Mao Tse-tung probably will be dreaming of steel for the cannon of Mao. They will probably, if not hold hands literally, share excited schemes and dreams of a new co-prosperity sphere to be carved into the Orient between them. . . .

"Maoism literally stands on the backs of some 700 to 800 million people, a people who dwell in what has been described as a 'barracks' communism, a 'barracks society,' where the standards of living of the Chinese millions have been sacrificed and reduced to raw-boned survival fare. In lieu of decent standards of living, they are led and indoctrinated with the thoughts of Mao. . . .

"Maoism represents the most ruthlessly determined ideological offensive against the world working class. . . . It represents a challenge to the whole world revolutionary movement in a determined programmed scheme to fulfill the mystical, ancient dream of the Great Han Nation to dominate the rest of the world."

Those are the pretended heirs of Lenin speaking! Those reactionary, racist, sexist bureaucrats! I don't think you could find a better example of what the ideology of "socialism in one country" leads to. Or why we say it is counterrevolutionary through and through.

At the same time Peking's claims have been dealt a blow. The idea that Maoism was a clear left-wing alternative to Moscow, that it represented a break with Stalinism, that it would stand with the world revolution even if Moscow didn't, has been dealt a gigantic blow by the events of the last year.

Guevarism has also suffered. There has been a thirteen-year drought since the victory of the Cuban revolution, and during this time the idea that guerrilla warfare would be the road to revolution has lost more and more credibility.

The idea that petty-bourgeois nationalism could lead the Arab revolution to fulfillment, the idea that the radicalization of youth would lead to socialism without the working class—all these various alternatives to Leninism, all these substitute models of revolutionary leadership, put forth by different groups and individuals, many of them attracting tens of thousands of militants, have all suffered blows.

Today there are thousands of militants around the world who used to believe that Moscow pointed the way, or believed that Maoism was not Stalinism and showed the way, or that an improved Guevarism was the way, or Nasserism, or Sukarnoism, or youthism.

I'm sure many of them no longer believe these alternative paths can lead to the victory of world revolution.

These people, and their numbers will grow by the thousands and thousands, present a golden opportunity for the Fourth International. But there is nothing automatic in the process of winning them to the world party of so-

cialist revolution. What is certain is that there will be more and more proofs of the bankruptcy of these alternative forces as, time and time again, they prove incapable of leading the masses forward. But it is not predetermined that we will replace them over time. That outcome depends on what we do and how we do it—on our program and on our capacities.

## The Growth of the Fourth International

Developments inside the International in the last couple of years give a picture of the attractive power of the world Trotskyist movement and the tremendous opportunities and responsibilities before us. Just look at the French Trotskyist organization, the Ligue Communiste, with more than 2,000 members, which grew out of the struggles of May-June 1968. In Switzerland, where we had a mere handful of comrades a few years ago, there are now several hundred, many of whom came out of the Communist Party youth.

In Argentina, which you know a lot more about now than you did five days ago, our comrades in the Socialist Party of Argentina are making big strides in growth. They're involved in every sector of the mass movement.

In Canada, we have a Trotskyist movement of several hundred comrades who have been deeply involved in the struggles in Québec, in working in the NDP, the Canadian labor party, and building the antiwar and women's movements. During the last few years they have established a Québécois unit of the Canadian revolutionary party, with a French-language newspaper.

In Israel, we now have Israeli and Arab comrades, under severe persecution for refusing to support the Israeli army's occupation of the Arab lands.

There are other developments you may be less familiar with, such as the rise of a nucleus of Iranian Trotskyists, determined to build the Iranian section of the Fourth International, developing a program, and publishing material in Persian. The Iranian comrades are grappling with the national question, the woman question, the strategy for revolution in Iran.

There are now more than 100 comrades in Australia. In Britain, where we had a mere handful several years ago, there are now several hundred. In New Zealand, the comrades are building a Trotskyist nucleus, leading the antiwar movement and women's liberation movement and participating in the labor movement.

In Brazil, the country that dominates all of Latin America, there is a growing nucleus of comrades that are looking toward Trotskyism, who want to build a Trotskyist party. In Germany, the section has grown considerably. In addition to a regular paper and a theoretical magazine, the comrades have begun putting out a monthly review similar to *Intercontinental Press*. In Hong Kong there is a group of young militants who oppose Maoism from an anti-Stalinist point of view. This is one of the most encouraging developments in the new generation of revolutionary youth. These activists put out a magazine which carries articles about Trotsky and Trotskyism.

We have comrades in the French West Indies, in Martinique and Guadeloupe, fighting to build a Trotskyist group there, working with a group that split to the left

from the CP. At the University of Dakar, in Senegal, there is a Trotskyist nucleus that has begun writing and publishing material from a revolutionary Marxist point of view.

In Spain, we have several hundred comrades who have played a significant role in the student movement, in the workers commissions, and in organizing antiwar demonstrations. If you want to follow what the Spanish comrades are doing, you can even find information in the Spanish bourgeois press when it reports struggles in the labor movement or the student movement, or major demonstrations. The role of the Trotskyist nucleus as one of the small but vanguard forces often receives unfavorable mention in the Franco press. This growth will continue. It represents one of the greatest opportunities we have had since the founding of the Fourth International.

And remember about all this: these comrades are like those of you assembled here. They come from the same background, the same generation, the same upsurge in the world revolution, are attracted to the same banner, want to accomplish the same tasks. That is why the political line adopted by the Fourth International is so crucial. Without the correct line we cannot move forward to educate and integrate these thousands of new comrades into a homogeneous world party, fighting effectively in every country to construct the organizations that can lead the workers and their allies to overthrow capitalism.

## The Guerrilla Warfare Line

In that light, I will report on the evolution of the differences in the International. I hope that as a result comrades will get even more interested and be better prepared for the international discussion. Everyone should read and reread the material that is already published and will be published, so that at our next convention we will be able to decide our positions on the questions under discussion within the world movement. We have available in translation every single contribution that has been made to the world movement discussion. It is the responsibility of every comrade to read and consider this material and follow the discussion as it evolves.

At the last world congress, held in 1969, guerrilla warfare, linked primarily to Bolivia, was adopted as a strategic orientation for Latin America. We were completely opposed and made our criticisms known. Many comrades may have sincerely considered the guerrilla warfare line only as a tactical orientation for a couple of key countries because of concrete circumstances. But as the line has evolved in practice, it more and more contradicted the capacity of our small forces to build Trotskyist parties, as we had said it would.

In Bolivia, almost every comrade who visited Cuba was lost to the Castroist ELN when they returned. In Argentina, the PRT (Combatiente) moved further and further away from Trotskyism. The guerrilla warfare error was extended elsewhere: it was projected for Brazil, where a tiny handful of sympathizers of the Fourth International were inspired by the example of the PRT-ERP; it was projected for India, where a layer of important young comrades had already been lost to the Naxalites; for Ireland, where the British and Irish Trotskyist forces



placed hopes in the terrorist group Saor Eire.

In other words, what began in the minds of many comrades as a tactic applicable to the Bolivian comrades in a particular situation began to permeate the Fourth International as the development of a new general line that could have the most destructive consequences.

This development has several roots. One was the adoption of a continent-wide schema and hope for an immediate breakthrough by a kind of bootstrap operation in place of the long, hard road of party building. It was held that the bourgeoisie would be able to respond with all-out repression to any mass upsurge, so there was no possibility of action and organization other than resorting to armed struggle, i.e., guerrilla war, begun by tiny groups.

Just prior to the last world congress we had seen massive upsurges in the cities in Latin America, including the gigantic Mexican events. Although the resolution mentions these, it goes on to say: "Nonetheless, revolutionary Marxists cannot conclude from this that the 'classical' variant calling for a progressive rise and broadening of the mass movement and its structuring and reinforcement through traditional organizational forms before it reaches the armed struggle has been revalidated . . . such a variant is not the most probable." (Resolution on Latin America, printed in *Intercontinental Press*, July 14, 1969, p. 720.) This false analysis—contradicted by subsequent events in Bolivia itself, in Peru, in Argentina, in Mexico, in Chile—was part of the origin of the dangerous course the International is on today.

The second source of the problem was the concept of guerrilla warfare, not as one of the forms of armed struggle that may come out of the mass movement, but as a force separate from the mass movement for a prolonged period. That isolation is why the supporters of the guerrilla warfare schema are continually talking about the need to "link up" guerrilla struggle with mass struggle.

Third was the disastrous concept that you can arbitrarily pick the place where the gigantic breakthrough will occur. This concept was expressed by Comrade Livio Maitan in his article entitled "An Insufficient Document" (International Internal Discussion Bulletin collected *Discussion on Latin America* (1968-1972), pp. 11-16). He expressed the conviction that the International would be built around Bolivia. It's hard for comrades who didn't attend the world congress to appreciate the degree to which this idea was accepted. As an observer from the SWP, I'll never forget how one of the European leaders of the movement sat down next to me and told me seriously and sincerely that he believed the next world congress would be held in La Paz.

The results were the opposite. Instead of victory, the Bolivian workers have suffered a terrible defeat and our party has been dealt smashing blows. It's important for the comrades to familiarize themselves with one of the most important contributions yet made to the discussion, an article by Comrade Aníbal Lorenzo of the Argentine PRT (Verdad) entitled "The Lessons of Bolivia." [IIDB collected *Discussion on Latin America*, 1968-72, pp. 205-216] It details the disastrous course of events. It explains how the political line of the Bolivian section, backed by the majority of the International, oriented them toward preparation for guerrilla warfare, downplayed the openings in the cities, and excluded any "classical variant" along the lines

of the Russian revolution. This false policy prevented our party from rapidly taking advantage of revolutionary openings under the Torres regime.

I also recommend reading the report by comrades Sábado and Enero on the evolution of the Bolivian party and the situation today [SWP Internal Information Bulletin, No. 5 in 1972, pp. 3-7]. The two comrades, with two very different points of view politically, one from North America and the other from France, were sent to Latin America by the United Secretariat to discuss with the Bolivian and Argentine comrades and came back with an information report.

Their report lays out the entire story of the Bolivian party since 1967 and the defeat suffered last August during the Banzer coup. A tiny nucleus of comrades has regrouped in exile in Chile, but the conclusion they have drawn from their experiences is not the need to reverse the political line that led to the defeat; their conclusion is that they must renew preparation for guerrilla warfare. They criticize themselves for a lack of technical and organizational preparation, not for a fundamentally erroneous political line. To our knowledge, not a single political conclusion has been drawn by the Bolivian leaders from their experiences over the last five years on the loss of so many of our young militants to the Guevarist forces in Bolivia. More important, the correct conclusions have not been drawn by the architects of the false policy, the majority leadership of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International.

## From the World Congress to Sallustro

The 1969 world congress was faced with a split in the Argentine party. The congress tried to settle who was a majority and who was a minority, and on this numerical basis alone recognized the PRT(Combatiente) as the official section and the PRT(Verdad) as the sympathizing section. I leave aside whether this judgment as to which was larger was correct. This question has been overweighed by much bigger political factors. The important thing is that both the PRT(Verdad) (which has carried out a fusion with the PSA, Socialist Party of Argentina) and the PRT(Combatiente), the political party now leading the ERP, Revolutionary People's Army, were both recognized as official components of the world Trotskyist movement.

The discussion at the world congress tended to center on the Bolivian question. Many comrades, even the critics who were not so farsighted as Joe Hansen, thought the problem was simply a mistaken line for Bolivia. As it turns out, that was not true. In preparation for the fourth congress of the PRT in Argentina, three central leaders of the group that became the PRT(Combatiente) wrote *El Unico Camino Hasta el Poder Obrero y el Socialismo* (*The Only Road to Workers' Power and Socialism*). [IIDB, Vol. IX, No. 4, 1972] Written in 1968, this pamphlet outlines the fundamental political positions, most of which are still held today by the PRT(Combatiente).

According to the *Unico Camino*, Trotskyism is one of the currents in world politics that represent a continuation of Leninism. But it is inadequate. Maoism is the other revolutionary continuation of Leninism on a world scale. Castroism is defined as the higher synthesis of Mao-

ism and Trotskyism and projects the political program and strategy that can lead to the victory of the Latin American revolution. The *Unico Camino* document has now been translated in its entirety—it's very long—and will be available in English and French as an International Internal Discussion Bulletin in a short time.

Most of us did not know anything about the *Unico Camino* before the world congress. None of us had read it. It had been issued for a short time, and only in Spanish. The comrades of the PRT(Verdad) vainly tried to warn the whole congress about the meaning of the *Unico Camino* document. We later learned that a section of the central leadership of the world movement, leaders of the majority, *did* know about it. They know that the PRT (Combatiente), which was recognized as a section of the Fourth International, could not be called a Trotskyist party on the basis of its program. They had read the *Unico Camino*! But they told the congress that *El Unico Camino* represented the views of its three authors and was not the PRT(C) line. Only recently did we learn that it really did represent the official PRT(C) line all along.

Secondly, leaders of the majority of the world congress, without informing the minority, deliberately decided to defer any political debate with the comrades of the PRT (Combatiente). They decided not to try to win them to a Trotskyist political line until they had worked together for a while and won the "confidence" of the comrades of the PRT (Combatiente). They thought that by making what seemed to them a small and delayed sacrifice in political clarity, there would be tremendous short-run gains—a big fighting organization that would carry the banner of the Fourth International.

The result has been just the opposite. We do not question the fighting capacity of the PRT (Combatiente), nor the courage of the PRT(C) comrades, nor their integrity, nor the sincerity of the intentions. The crux of the problem is their political line, and that is the one place where the world movement was obligated to help them most, criticize them, discuss with them. Their political line started from taking the expectation of continental civil war instead of the realities of the class struggle as the fundamental basis of analysis. Their political line substituted the guerrilla actions of a handful for the mass movement. Their line led from hijacking delivery trucks and distributing meat or milk in the working class barrios to assassination and kidnapping. Such a course shattered any pretense of their being a Trotskyist party in program and activity. This, in our opinion, has been the political evolution of the PRT (Combatiente) of Argentina, which has paid a heavy price. Almost a third of the comrades are now in jail and many have been tortured and murdered by the regime.

In February 1972, the ERP kidnapped Sallustro, an official of the Fiat company in Argentina. The action was given sensational treatment in the press, and radicalizing militants throughout the entire world were given the impression that this was Trotskyism in practice. The SWP Political Committee felt that this impression should not be left to stand unanswered and made a statement which was printed in *The Militant*.

The statement expressed moral solidarity with the victimized comrades of the PRT-ERP. It put the blame for

all the conditions in Argentina that prompted such actions as the kidnapping on the bourgeoisie and its military regime, where the blame belongs.

But our statement made a political differentiation from the method practiced by the PRT-ERP. It said, "In place of powerful actions by the masses themselves, the ERP is attempting to substitute small actions by a tiny group. Their hopes are placed on these actions serving as examples to the people living in the slums. They hope that the dramatic nature of the 'exemplary actions' will inspire the masses to begin moving toward toppling the old regime and establishing a government of their own.

"In reality, the work of bringing the masses into the political arena in all their invincible power differs qualitatively from such notions. It requires deep involvement in the daily life of the masses. It requires patient struggling, under the guidance of a revolutionary-socialist party, to project demands directly linked to the economic, social, and political needs of the masses, and to organize support for these demands in such a way as to raise the self-confidence of the masses and take them through transitional steps onto the road of a socialist revolution." [IIDB, Vol. X, No. 2, appendix I]

We wrote this in full expectation that the elected leadership of the world Trotskyist movement, the United Secretariat, would make a similar declaration at its next meeting. We expected this, because whatever differences we may have over guerrilla warfare, it seemed clear to us that the PRT (Combatiente) and the ERP had evolved beyond the limits of what the majority of the United Secretariat had claimed was the world congress line.

But just the opposite happened. At the meeting of the United Secretariat we proposed that a statement similar to our Political Committee statement be adopted and distributed in the world press. Instead, our statement was rejected; the majority refused to make any *public* statement whatsoever. They likewise refused to make any *internal* statement for the guidance of the International, and the majority of the United Secretariat adopted a motion disapproving the publication of the SWP Political Committee statement in *The Militant*. Instead of the International taking a guiding position, different sections of the International issued diverse statements about the Sallustro affair. The newspapers of some sections were semi-critical, like the article in *Was Tun*, the German paper, which was reprinted in *The Militant*. Others, like the Indian and Canadian comrades, had a view similar to ours.

Other sections misjudged the situation entirely. The *Red Mole*, for instance, stated that the kidnapping proved that the masses of Argentine workers support guerrilla warfare and actions like the kidnapping. *Rood*, the Flemish-language newspaper of the Belgian section, defined the kidnapping as a terrorist action, and said it was in favor of such terrorism. Other papers expressed other opinions. But most endorsed the political path of the PRT (Combatiente).

## Mandel's Brief on the Sallustro Affair

The key article, in our opinion, was a major center-spread editorial in the April 21, 1972, issue of the French-

language Belgian paper, *La Gauche*, which is edited by Ernest Mandel. In the absence of any official statement by the Fourth International, and given the fact that Comrade Mandel is the editor, this article was taken as the opinion of the majority leadership of the Fourth International on the Sallustro affair. This is one of the most important articles written thus far because it attempts to smuggle terrorism, under the name "urban guerrilla war," into the traditions of Leninism in order to justify the course of the PRT (Combatiente). ("Class Struggle and Armed Struggle in Argentina," SWP Internal Information Bulletin, No. 5 in 1972, pp. 33-36.)

I want to single out four key points in this article.

The first is the statement that "our comrades of the ERP do not uphold individual terrorism at all and do not practice it either." The assassination of Sanchez, the kidnapping of Sallustro and similar acts are not terrorism, according to the editor of *La Gauche*. They are applications of "the principles of urban guerrilla war, which is hardly foreign to the traditions of the workers movement. That is, unless one excludes from this workers movement Lenin, who advocated guerrilla war after December, 1905 in Russia, Fidel Castro and 'Che' Guevara. . . ."

The second point of the editorial is that one must draw a sharp line of demarcation between the workers movement in the advanced countries and elsewhere. In countries where fundamental democratic rights exist, the workers movement can "blossom out freely" and organize itself openly. It does not have to face violent repression in the early stages of its organization and can create bodies of self-defense to defeat any fascist threat. Self-defense can grow out of mass workers organizations. On the other hand, there are countries where assassination, torture, and concentration camps become the daily instruments of the capitalist government. Under such conditions no mass movement can succeed beyond spasmodic flare-ups which evoke massive repression.

The third point, flowing from points one and two, is that the course proposed and applied by the comrades of the PRT (Combatiente) is correct. "Revolutionists construct autonomous and clandestine armed detachments, which are implanted in the mass movement as it matures and attains higher and higher levels." This role "of armed protection, cover and regroupment," was played by the comrades of the PRT (Combatiente) in the great uprising in Córdoba, the article asserts.

The fourth point is the "affirmation of our agreement with the general orientation of the PRT [Combatiente] of developing the armed struggle, while expressing the hope that our comrades will find the means to link this struggle in the most intimate way to the development of the mass struggle . . . with a clear political orientation toward the socialist and proletarian revolution, against any concept of revolution by stages." This "hope" was necessary because *Combatiente* had already begun publishing articles, reprinted for information in the August 11 World Outlook section of *The Militant*, explaining the need for an alliance with sections of the national bourgeoisie. The *La Gauche* editorial goes on, "the lesson to be drawn from the events in Argentina in this regard is, moreover, of universal importance." In other words, the example is not restricted to Argentina. "The temptation

to resort to a fascist regime or to a military dictatorship constantly recurs to the bourgeoisie as soon as the class struggle becomes exacerbated anywhere in the world."

## Four Points of Disorientation

We disagree fundamentally with all four of these points. We think that if these four points were adopted as the line of the Fourth International, we would have further catastrophes and defeats in Latin America, and the disintegration and disorientation of any cadres who followed this line. And, of course, it would be impossible to restrict this line to the colonial world, let alone Latin America.

The first point is false to the core. The Sallustro kidnapping is terrorism exercised against an individual, no matter what label you try to paste on it—urban guerrilla warfare, rural guerrilla warfare, or whatever. This was a case of the deliberate use of violence against an individual member of representative of the ruling class in order to "punish" or "terrorize" the class into changing its policies; or to "inspire" the masses to struggle. It was exactly the kind of action, outside the framework of civil war, that Leninists have always opposed, whether it's done in rural areas or in urban areas. It was precisely in struggle against such terrorism that revolutionary Marxism was born in Russia. Terrorism is the antithesis of Leninism, and let us say, it distorts the truth to claim Lenin was an advocate of actions like those of the PRT-ERP.

Furthermore, Lenin's ideas on armed groups following the 1905 uprising—a close reading of which do *not* support the ERP line—were not the last word by Lenin, Trotsky, and the Comintern on the construction of a revolutionary party. Some not insignificant events happened after 1905-06—such as the insurrection in October 1917 and the conquest of power by the Russian workers under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky. They drew some further conclusions from this experience and later criticized the errors of estimation made during the 1905-06 period. If it is true that the policies being followed by the PRT-ERP reflect some of the ideas of Che and Fidel, you can't throw Lenin into the same sack. It is obvious why Trotsky was not referred to in the *La Gauche* article. The editor couldn't find *anything* in Trotsky's writings, around 1905 or any other time, that could be twisted to support guerrilla warfare as the road to party building and state power.

That's why it is very important, when you reread the documents of the Latin American discussion, to study Comrade Hansen's document "In Defense of the Leninist Strategy of Party Building." The systematic attempt he makes in that document to go through Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Trotsky is not just a scholastic exercise. He is raising a fundamental question: "Is this road—the road to revolution voted for by a majority at the last world congress, supported by the majority of the central leaders of the International, and played out in Bolivia and Argentina in the last three years—the Leninist road, the road of our traditions?" We say, no. It is a departure from and a revision of these traditions.

We reject both arguments made in the second point of the *La Gauche* article about the impossibility of mass

movements developing. First, it is appalling to read the passage about the "free blossoming" of the mass movements in countries like the United States. Did the civil-rights movement in the South "blossom freely"? If Malcolm X were alive, he could say a few words on how movements freely "blossom" under bourgeois democracy. No, conditions are not quite that free. They have not been in the past, and will not be in the future. There is always a dialectical interplay between the exercise of democratic rights by the masses and the attempt of the ruling class to take them back, between struggle and repression.

We always felt, as Cannon said, that there would be one or two scuffles before the workers supplanted the bourgeoisie. That was why he always carried a shillelagh. If this proved he was Irish, I suspect he thought it might also come in handy if a little scuffling went on.

More importantly, we reject—as reality rejected at the very time the *La Gauche* article was written—the one-sided schema that recognizes the facts about the repression and the ruthless reactionary character of the military dictatorship in Argentina, but does not see the larger picture. It does not take into account the implications of the rise of the mass movement, the tremendous power of the organized workers, the great ferment within the union movement, the unparalleled openings for a revolutionary Marxist party, the insurrectionary explosions that have repeatedly taken place in Argentina, the potential for neutralizing much of the repression.

At the very time the *La Gauche* editorial was being written, at the very time the Sallustro kidnapping took place, at the very time the comrades of the majority leadership of the International thought the line of the PRT (Combatiente) was being vindicated, our comrades in the PRT (Verdad) were doing union work, leading strikes, building the student movement, educating on women's liberation, fighting to maximize every opening in the army, taking full advantage of the electoral openings, and doing everything else that is beginning to bear fruit. In other words, the Argentine reality was much more complex than visualized in the one-sided schema of the PRT (Combatiente) and the majority of the leaders of the International.

The third point we disagree with is the idea that the Leninist concept of armed struggle is to organize armed detachments of individuals from the party and to implant them or link them or inject them in the arm of the mass movement when it becomes timely. Not only is this the route of adventurism; it rejects the Leninist approach, the transitional approach, to the arming of the proletariat as an integral part of organizing and leading the mass movement.

The masses will take power arms in hand. That's the lesson of history. They will do so through the organs of and under the banners of the workers' organizations. Any attempt to organize armed detachments separate from the workers mass organizations dooms a small group to adventurism and brings unnecessary repression upon it. The end result is to *disarm* the mass movement by depriving it of key cadres who could help prepare all forms of struggle that the masses will have to engage in. As Leninists, we are less concerned about injecting things into a mass movement from outside than we are about winning the leadership of the masses on the basis of a

program that can lead to a victorious conquest of power. Leadership is not simply a function of knowing how to pick up the gun.

The *La Gauche* statement about the PRT-ERP role in Córdoba is equally significant because it bears so little relation to the truth. [See "On Comrade Germain's Half-Truths: Or How the ERP Flag Got on the Coffin," by Fred Halstead, IIDB, Vol. X, No. 8, June 1973—JB, June 1973]

Finally, we reject the idea that the line of the PRT-ERP is correct or that the lessons to be drawn from the Sallustro kidnapping have any positive universal importance. Carried out to its logical conclusion, this assertion would lead to a revision of the basic Trotskyist principles of Leninist party building and the application of the transitional program. If this policy applies for Argentina, isn't it true for India? Isn't this the course the Iranian comrades should be following? Isn't this true for Spain, and Greece, and Ireland, and Israel?

Isn't this true for Eastern Europe? Isn't this true for the Soviet Union? And if it is true for the Soviet Union today, wasn't it true for the Soviet Union in the late 1920s and 1930s, where repression was a thousand times fiercer than in Argentina today, and not a single voice demanding democratic rights for the workers was allowed to be heard? If this is true, did not Trotsky make one of the most fundamental errors in the entire history of the world working-class movement by not capitalizing on his immense military knowledge and prestige, by not advocating guerrilla warfare as the course for the Left Opposition, and instead leading the comrades of the Left Opposition to their deaths as they went down fighting ideologically in the 1930s for the program of Leninism and preparing for the new party of political revolution in the Soviet Union?

These questions must be answered. They must be thought out to the end and every conclusion drawn. Because if this line as expressed in *La Gauche* is correct for Argentina, and has "universal importance," it is correct for the Soviet Union. And if it is correct under conditions of today, it was correct tenfold in the 1930s.

## The Responsibility of the Majority Leadership

The International Executive Committee of the Fourth International, the IEC, will meet at the end of 1972. It will be the most important meeting of the International Executive Committee since the reunification of the Fourth International. The meeting will begin discussion of alternative balance sheets summing up the results in Bolivia and Argentina of the application of the line adopted by the majority at the last world congress.

In our opinion, the responsibility of this IEC is to recognize the disastrous outcome of the line of the last world congress and vote to reverse this line.

It's very important to understand what we are after and what we are not after. We are not out to castigate individual leaders who took part in developing these ideas and implementing them. We're not asking for any *mea culpas*, for any breast-beating confessions. We're a political organization, not a religious one. All comrades are allowed to make mistakes, even several mistakes. In fact, one of the tests of any leadership, and any serious

revolutionist, is the capacity to continue to work with comrades who make mistakes, like we all do, to help correct mistakes and to move forward. Nor are we after scapegoats.

But an international leadership that cannot learn from experience and correct mistakes, an international leadership that portrays defeats as victories, that has to redefine objective reality to do this, that tries to hide the truth from the ranks of the world movement—such a leadership cannot take the Fourth International forward, cannot make the most of the unparalleled opportunities and accomplish the tasks before us.

There can be no buck-passing. We must honestly face the results of the line that was adopted by the majority international leadership in 1969. The heart of the problem is not the errors made by the Bolivian and Argentine comrades in carrying out the line. The debacles cannot be passed off as a result of the relative "incapacity" or "inexperience" of the Bolivian and Argentine comrades. Instead, the leaders of the majority at the last world congress, as leaders representing the entire world movement, must honestly draw the balance sheet on the incorrectness of the line, squarely facing what it led to and what it will continue to lead to if not reversed.

## Adaptation to Ultraleftism

We believe that the majority of the central leadership of the Fourth International failed to pass a test when confronted with ultraleftism. Unlike Lenin and Trotsky, who led a struggle against ultraleftism in the early years of the Third International, the majority of the central leaders of the Fourth International adapted to ultraleftism.

Although the role of the victory of the Russian revolution has no counterpart today, there are many similarities in the conditions that moved young revolutionists toward the early Comintern and the conditions that move them toward the Fourth International today. Having rejected Social Democracy, having rejected centrism, many revolutionists came to the Comintern after the First World War with inexperience and with ultraleft notions. Some degree of ultraleftism almost always develops among young militants breaking from the Social Democracy, from centrism.

Lenin and Trotsky did not judge these comrades as they would hardened reformists or rotten bureaucrats like leaders of the Second International. They were good militants, good revolutionists. But the challenge facing the Third International was to lead these comrades, to educate them. And in order to teach them, Lenin and Trotsky had to do battle with them politically, ideologically, theoretically and win them to an understanding of the political strategy that could lead to socialism. Much of the writing of Lenin and Trotsky during that period was aimed at accomplishing that task. Without polemicalizing against ultraleft adaptation, without clarity on program and practice, only *miseducation* occurs, only a drift from principled politics. The historical acquisitions which are our most precious capital go down the drain.

The decision made at the last world congress not to polemicalize with the comrades of the PRT(Combatiente) was just the opposite of what was needed. The majority leadership knew that the comrades of the PRT(Combatiente) were not Trotskyists. They had read the *Unico*

*Camino*. They should have begun to debate with Combatiente, not in order to drive the PRT(C) comrades away from the International, but to win them to the program of the International, to prepare them for the massive struggles and opportunities in Argentina. The expedient of postponing political debate until they could hopefully win the confidence of the comrades and then have a debate without alienating them turned into a three-and-a-half year postponement and reinforced the evolution of the PRT(Combatiente) away from Trotskyism, as I have outlined. The decision to sacrifice political clarity in the hope of big short-run gains in forces and prestige ended up in a sacrifice of clarity and the political and physical loss of valuable cadres.

The roots of the errors made by the majority of the International leadership do not lie in some kind of incompetence. They are lodged in real processes going on. The discussion in the Fourth International takes place in the context of a tremendous worldwide debate among revolutionary-minded youth over the road to power.

The error made by the majority leadership stems from misreading the historical experience of the entire past period, from an analysis which construes the Chinese experience and the Cuban experience not as exceptions but more and more as the norm, the model to adopt and generalize from, as indicating the path that can lead the revolution forward.

Hugo Blanco has pointed to the tremendous pressure of Castroism which the International leadership adapted to. Blanco also pointed out that this adaptation occurred just at the time that the best of a whole generation of militants had gone through the experience of Guevarism and Castroism and were looking for alternatives and were open to a Leninist answer.

This is what's involved in our opinion. Trying to turn exceptions into the rule, replacing the classical norm, and thus conciliating with alien currents. By "classical norm" we don't mean any mechanical repetition of the Russian revolution. That won't happen here or anywhere else: it may not happen under the conditions of war, it may not happen with a gigantic peasantry. The classical norm for us means the norm of party building and leadership of the mass movement that must be drawn from the Bolshevik experience.

As Comrade Lorenzo outlined in his article on Bolivia, the classical norm *did* unfold there last year. If a revolutionary Marxist party had been prepared, organizationally and programmatically, it might have led the Bolivian workers to power. And even if the proletarian victory could not have been achieved just then because of objective limits to the size and influence of our forces, then at least the proper lessons could have been taught so that a future revolutionary upsurge would be crowned with success. The same type of situation is developing in Argentina today, in our opinion.

## Read the Discussion

I want to mention the written material that comrades should become thoroughly familiar with as soon as possible: first is the large International Information Bulletin *Discussion on Latin America*, which reprints every contribution on Latin America since 1968. The resolution

as adopted by the last world congress is available in a special issue of *Intercontinental Press*, which has also been reprinted.

Second is the new bulletin containing the article by Comrade Lorenzo on Bolivia (IIDB, Vol. 9, no. 3). Third is the recent bulletin with several contributions by comrades in Latin America—two from Venezuela, one from Blanco, and several others (IIDB, Vol. 9, no. 2). Fourth, we are now completing the translation of the *Unico Camino* pamphlet, written in preparation for the fourth congress of the PRT, before the 1969 world congress. The comrades of the central leadership of the PRT(Combatiente) have requested that the International translate it and make it available because it remains their political position and is one of the documents around which they educate their militants. The PRT(C) has also requested that the International circulate the documents of the fifth congress of the PRT(Combatiente), held in July 1970, where the decision to form the ERP was made. We will be translating that too.

Also scheduled for publication is the Sabado and Enero report on Bolivia and Argentina mentioned earlier. Finally, following the IEC, we will have the counterposed balance sheets on Bolivia and Argentina.

## The 'Reformist' Program of the SWP?

While Latin America remains the key political issue around which discussions for the world congress revolve, there are several other important questions that I want to mention.

First, I call your attention to the situation in the British section of the Fourth International. In preparation for their May 1972 convention, the National Committee of the International Marxist Group adopted a major political resolution which, among other things, characterizes the program of the SWP as "reformist." The document asserts that our attempt to develop a program for the women's movement, for the student movement, the Black movement, and the Chicano movement, using the transitional approach as a guide, is a revision of Leninism and has resulted in the SWP developing reformist programs. In our opinion, the IMG document rejects the approach of the transitional program. ["Perspectives Document," by Alan Jones and Clarissa Howard, SWP Internal Information Bulletin, No. 3 in 1972, pp. 3-66.]

This resolution was adopted by the IMG National Committee, circulated and discussed throughout the organization, and adopted at their convention. After the entire discussion had taken place and just before the convention vote, one of the authors proposed that a post-convention edited version should contain no specific references to the SWP—not because the references were incorrect, but because they thought it better to write a separate document on the SWP as a contribution to the world discussion.

Important political questions are involved here. The coming American revolution is not small or insignificant. Building an American party capable of leading that revolution is not a small or insignificant task. If the SWP has adopted a reformist program, then we cannot build a party capable of leading the American workers to power, and this implies that the SWP must be read out of the world Trotskyist movement. The party that leads the

American revolution can make mistakes. It could make an opportunist error and correct itself. It could make an ultraleft mistake and recover. But once a party adopts a reformist program and perspective for the reform of capitalism not its revolutionary overturn by the workers, then that party should be excluded from the world Trotskyist movement. It has crossed the class line dividing Leninism from Social Democracy or Stalinism. That's the political logic of accepting the IMG leadership's position on the SWP as expressed in their document. We hope they rethink its implications.

The second point concerning Britain is a large bulletin entitled "Report of the Fact-Finding Commission of the United Secretariat on the Internal Situation Within the International Marxist Group, British Section of the Fourth International." This report has been made available in an Internal Information Bulletin (No. 2, 1972) for the membership of the SWP and the YSA to read and study. Last year a situation developed in the IMG that led the United Secretariat to agree unanimously to the request of the British leadership for a fact-finding commission to investigate. A series of victimizations, censures, suspensions, and expulsions of a political minority had taken place. Many of us felt that these actions were alien to the traditions of Leninism.

A commission investigated and brought back its report, and the United Secretariat also expressed its opinion. All these items are contained in the bulletin. This is very important for the comrades to study. First of all, it's important because without democracy in the International and all its sections, you cannot build a revolutionary party or develop a correct program. A party without internal democracy cannot be a revolutionary party.

Secondly, comrades should study the bulletin because some of the antecedents of the IMG political resolution that I just mentioned are included in the documentation. I especially call your attention to an article by Alan Jones, one of the central leaders of the IMG and author of the adopted political resolution. The article is entitled "On the 'Theory' of Democratic and Transitional Demands and Other Stupidities." It includes a polemic against Comrade Novack's book *Democracy and Revolution* and against the application of the transitional program by the British minority Tendency.

## No Organizational Victimizations

I must make one other point here: the worst thing that could possibly happen would be for the crucially important political discussion to get bogged down into a discussion over organizational questions, grievances, criticisms. We're not interested in that. The only meaningful discussion is a political debate on the key issues before the world movement. But we also say clearly: the SWP and the YSA cannot stand for the violation of the democratic rights of comrades in the International. We cannot allow undemocratic measures to be used against this minority in Britain, nor can we stand for the expulsion from the International of the comrades of the PRT (La Verdad). If there's not room in our international movement for the comrades of PRT(Verdad), now functioning as the PSA, then there is no possibility of building an International.

We learned a big lesson—from Lenin, from Trotsky, from our own experience in building the international movement: the most precious acquisition of our international movement is our human resources, our historically developed cadres. We will not accept or stand for the cavalier destruction or victimization of these cadres. We settled that a long time ago.

## The World Congress Agenda

I'd like to go over a few points that will be on the world congress agenda as it is currently set. We are sure there will be additions.

Discussion of the women's liberation movement is on the agenda. This is very important because of the new rise of the women's movement and the experiences of our comrades in Argentina, Canada, Britain, Italy, Australia, New Zealand, and many other countries. We must analyze the resurgence of the women's struggles on the basis of our materialist theory and seek its roots in the new conditions of our time. It is very important to avoid the mistake of limiting this resolution to the advanced capitalist countries. If there's anything to learn from the history of the communist movement, for example the history of the Comintern, from the experience of the Chinese comrades in the women's movement, if there's anything to learn from the reality today in Argentina, in Iran, in the Arab world, it is that women's oppression and the struggle for liberation is a worldwide question. A resolution is needed that would indicate its international scope.

We also believe that our task in this respect is not much different than it was in the days of the Second International or the Third. Comrade Mary-Alice Waters reviewed this history in her talk here this week ["Feminism and the Marxist Movement," *ISR*, October 1972]. A correct political analysis of women's oppression and an understanding of the role of women's liberation struggles in building the vanguard party and mobilizing the masses in struggle against the ruling class have always been dividing lines between revolutionists and nonrevolutionists. So it's very important for the Fourth International to present a clear view on the women's liberation struggle and show how the Trotskyist line differs from that of the Stalinists, centrists, and other currents. A resolution will be prepared and discussed in the United Secretariat and then circulated to the entire world movement.

The Arab revolution will be on the agenda. Documents are now being prepared. In all probability, there will be counterposed positions on this question. I don't have to emphasize the importance of this question to this audience. We had a very thorough discussion on it last year.

The youth radicalization will again be on the agenda. We think it's important to draw a balance sheet of the last period, a comprehensive balance sheet of the practice, results and lessons of the youth movement in general and the functioning of the Trotskyist movement. One of our key concerns here is over the lag in implementing the line of building independent youth groups, especially in Europe.

A document on the new rise of workers' struggles in Western Europe is being prepared. We'll have to study this very carefully.

There will also be discussion on the Indian subcontinent.

The Chinese question remains on the agenda. This is

quite important. All the documents relating to the China discussion since 1968 are now available in a single *International Information Bulletin*. Some of the disagreement at the last world congress centered on conjunctural questions that arose in evaluating the "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution." Those were mostly questions of analysis which though important, are secondary, and time will settle them.

But there were two other differences which are very important, and are relevant to the heart of all the questions we're discussing. One has to do with the fundamental character of Maoism. We say it is marked by opportunism on an international scale in the interests of a crystallized privileged national bureaucratic caste trying to build socialism in one country, and interested in maneuvering with imperialism in hope of achieving peaceful coexistence. This view was rejected by a majority of comrades at the last world congress, who insisted on emphasizing the objective help they thought Peking was giving to the world revolution. In accordance with this, they rejected out of hand Comrade Hansen's prediction that Peking would make a serious peaceful coexistence overture to Nixon. I can't resist suggesting that comrades go back and read the July 26, 1971, issue of *Intercontinental Press*, which came out about the time the ping-pong diplomacy began. In the documents sections you'll notice a reprint of an article on China written more than two and a half years earlier. I think it's a good test of the line of a party if two years after writing an analysis of historic events still unfolding in the world working class movement, you can simply reprint the article without changing a sentence. It's worth rereading.

The second major dispute over China was whether Maoism is fundamentally Stalinism. We believe that it is a variant of Stalinism, to be sure, but it is Stalinism all the same, guided by the ideology of socialism in one country and subordinating the interests of the world revolution to those of the national bureaucratic caste headquartered in Peking. This position also was rejected by comrades Livio Maitan, Ernest Mandel, Pierre Frank, and their supporters, who took the line that the Chinese regime and party were bureaucratic centrist. These important questions will be on the gaenda again, and will have to be discussed.

## Comrades Krivine, Frank, and the International

I want to deal now with the question: Where are we at in the construction of the Fourth International? A year ago Alain Krivine and Pierre Frank wrote an article strongly criticizing the SWP's views on constructing an international movement. So it is worthwhile to take up this question and outline briefly the SWP leadership's views on what the nature of the International should be and on the problems of constructing the International at the present time.

First, an International and an international leadership is primarily a *political* leadership. The most important task of the International is to preserve and apply the principled political positions that are our heritage. It is the application of these principles on a world scale that underlies every big debate in the world workers' movement. They are the foundation on which we construct every

analysis, to which we anchor every tactical or strategic move.

Second, we don't believe that it is a question of either building the sections before building the International or the International before the sections. Quite the contrary, both tasks are completely intertwined. This is true if for no other reason than, as new militant forces come toward us looking for revolutionary answers, they must have an international alternative rooted in an analysis of the world class struggle. If your concept were to build sections first, you'd have to decide concretely which sections, where, and how far they should develop before building the International. Such an approach would be doomed in advance. You would have no world party to which to bring the revolutionists of every country as they come forward.

Third, we do not believe the problem of leadership in the Fourth International has been definitively solved. The leadership of the Fourth International is in evolution. The leadership is and must be much more than the members of the United Secretariat or the International Executive Committee. The leadership of the Fourth International, in our view, includes these comrades elected by world congresses and politically responsible to the world movement. But it also includes the leaders that have grown up and been tested in all the various sections and groups that come to the Fourth International. Drawing these forces—the leaderships of the sections and the leaderships of the new groups being formed and strengthened—into the collective political thinking of the International is a precondition for bringing our collective powers to bear on resolving the big problems we have to face.

Fourth, we believe that it is the responsibility of the international leadership to help build sections. But the main help it can give is political help. A correct political line, a correct political orientation is the most important thing the International has to offer.

We believe that it is a tremendous blunder to try and pick the next "hot spot," as the comrades of the majority did at the last world congress. It's like trying to pick the next "hot campus." Or pick the next factory where there will be a major strike. How many times have you tried to do that? And how many times were you right? Or pick the first country in Latin America that would overthrow capitalism. How did we do on that one? You can't hit the lucky number that way—and there's no need to do so. There's a tremendous unevenness in the world process which throws up opportunities and new openings in unexpected places.

We do not believe that the development of the International is an even process, with all sections progressing at the same pace. We don't think that all sections will be equally strong before one or another section takes power, or that big changes or advances in some part of the world cannot transform the International. We agree that if a section of the Fourth International took power in some country it would qualitatively transform the attractiveness of the Fourth International. Is there any comrade in the International who would doubt that? If the comrades had struggled for power and won in Bolivia, it would have meant a qualitative transformation of the reality of the Fourth International in the eyes of millions of workers around the world.

But we do not believe that we should count on any get-rich-quick schemes for the International—especially at the expense of political clarity. We were prevented from taking advantage of the Bolivian situation by an erroneous political line—not by lack of interest in or support for the work of the Bolivian comrades. We do not believe the path to success, to greater numbers, is diluting our line, our political program, and adapting to non-Trotskyist currents. There is no road to the construction of a revolutionary party in any single country other than beginning with a nucleus of Leninist cadres, oriented toward the mass movement, equipped with the transitional program and the transitional approach and imbued with the perspective of building a Leninist party. There is no substitute for this method. But once you have this, you can make impressive gains when the objective conditions open up—as our comrades in the Argentinian La Verdad group are beginning to do.

Fifth, we are against the International leadership imposing tactics on any section. It's not that tactical questions are unimportant. Tactical questions, like our orientation toward the labor party, or how to build the antiwar movement, are not small questions. We know from our readings of history that tactical decisions, up to the timing of an insurrection, are not small decisions. We do believe that tactical problems should be discussed in the International, that we should bring our collective knowledge and experience to bear on them. We have so many complex tactical problems in our own activities that we appreciate hearing any ideas or criticisms that other comrades have. But we know from experience, even with a national organization, that tactical prescriptions from afar can be disastrous if they are carried out. Tactical questions are very concrete and rooted in the peculiarities of a specific situation.

There's an even more important aspect to this point. Sometimes people from afar can be correct on tactical questions. But even to lay down correct tactical prescriptions from afar weakens the important thing we are trying to develop: the capacity of a party to create its own collective leadership, tested in struggle and capable of standing on its own feet. It's far better for a leadership in the making to make some mistakes, to work with each other, to test each other, to rectify the errors, to recruit a few more people and to move forward, rather than have its actions prescribed by someone else. No party can take power unless its leadership has gone through experiences together, developed mutual confidence, established homogeneity in line, and learned how to work out problems in common over a period of time.

Imagine, for example, what antiwar conferences would be like if we never had to work out a single tactical problem for ourselves, if from the beginning every decision was written down in a book, prescribed by some genius intellectual who could foresee all the problems. Even assuming the tactics were completely correct, what kind of cadre would we have today in this room? Suppose you had not gone through the experiences of battling through antiwar conferences, making decisions at abortion conferences, fighting to win leadership of the student movement, dealing with everyday tactical problems in the unions, organizing ourselves for participation in the



Gary, National Black Political Convention, fighting for our rights in the Chicano movement, etc. That's how we learn, that's how we develop, that's how we strengthen ourselves.

## A Lesson From the Comintern

In thinking about this, I reread *The First Ten Years of American Communism*, by Comrade Cannon. In there he tells about the debate over the "American Question" at the Fourth Congress of the Comintern. Cannon went to Moscow six months before the congress to take part in the preparations, participate in the International Executive Committee, and discuss American questions with the Soviet leaders.

There was a big controversy over undergroundism in the American party. Born in the conditions of repression after World War I, looking to the illegal Bolshevik party as a model and drawing some mechanical conclusions, a gigantic debate ensued within the American Communist Party over whether to take advantage of the conditions of legality. This was a tactical question, but it was obviously an important one. It had to do with the life or death of the American Communist Party in its infancy.

Cannon describes how he spoke at length with some of the Bolshevik leaders of the Comintern—Zinoviev, Bukharin, Radek, and others of some knowledge and standing, including Trotsky. These comrades always listened intently, asked questions, talked about the Bolshevik experiences, referred the Americans to some materials to study, even arranged for translation of documents available only in Russian—but remained noncommittal. The American comrades would go back and read, think about these discussions, study the documents, and return for further discussion. Not until Jim Cannon had been in Moscow for almost six months did a single Bolshevik leader express a definite opinion to him on what the American party should do.

Was this because they didn't have any opinion? No. When they finally spoke they were a hundred percent for taking immediate maximum advantage of every legal opening. Was it because they didn't have self-confidence, or felt they lacked the respect of the American party? No. It was because they understood the importance of the American party's leaders *themselves* grappling with some of these questions as a crucial step in the development of a party able to make the American revolution.

I don't believe we have any leaders in the International today whose qualifications are so superior to those of the Bolshevik leaders of the Comintern that they are justified in following a different course.

Sixth, we believe it's very important that the international leadership never abuse its authority. To do so is to abuse the entire International. We consider incidents like the Domingo letter and the leadership default on the Sallustro affair to be abuses of authority by the international leadership. Such things harm the entire International because they cut across the development of mutual respect based on common political principles and the experience of genuine collaboration. Such respect is the only basis on which an international leadership can have the authority to lead.

Seventh, does the SWP want a privileged position or

special role in the world movement? The answer is no. We want no privileged position or special role. We do think we have something to contribute to the international movement, for whatever it is worth. We've been very lucky in our history and we've said so openly. Our party has its direct roots not only in the early American workers' movement, but in the rise of the Comintern following the victorious Russian Revolution. These traditions were not just political or ideological, but were transmitted to us through a layer of cadres like Cannon and Dunne and others who went through a rich experience of either learning in the Comintern or later working directly with Trotsky.

We were also very lucky during World War II. We had comrades in jail, we lost comrades in the war, we lost comrades at sea. But the overwhelming majority of the party came through this carnage untouched—unlike the European comrades and others who faced a truly terrible ordeal. Thus, our party comes equipped with a continuity of revolutionary traditions, principles and experiences in international party building that go back to World War I, the Russian Revolution and the Comintern. This continuity, I think, is the greatest strength of the SWP, the main acquisition that our generation in the party possesses, and it's the biggest thing we have to offer the world movement. We offer it for what it's worth. We ask for no privileges and no special position. All we ask is that our ideas be fairly heard by being made available to the cadres of the world movement so they can evaluate our positions themselves.

## The Ranks Must Decide

Finally, we believe our concept of the International is the same as Trotsky's: that is, a world party of socialist revolution in which every member follows the politics and the life of the International to the best of his or her ability. We reject any notion that national questions are decided by the membership of sections and international questions are decided only by the international leadership. On the contrary, a key test of a leadership is whether it is capable of submitting all big questions to the ranks for the ranks to decide. This means making available the documents and the discussion articles that reflect the life of the International and the key debates in the International—the membership can be familiar with them, discuss them, learn from them, and make up their minds concerning them. Ultimately it is the ranks of the International, through a world congress that registers the opinion of the membership, which must guard the principles on which the International rests and deal with the problems of building the Fourth International. We reject any other concept.

One of the most important leadership responsibilities is to encourage comrades around the world, the ranks of all the Trotskyist groups, to get deeply involved in and learn the issues before the International. We know that there are big technical problems involved, especially in the smaller sections, to translate and circulate the large quantities of material involved, and there are problems in coordinating the discussions in the national sections with the International discussion. But these obstacles can

be surmounted if the will exists.

To us, the authority of a world congress of the Fourth International rests on only one thing: a rank and file that has read the documents, in their own language, that has seen translations of documents submitted to the world discussion expressing the opposite point of view from their own leaderships, that has discussed and debated the issues, that is capable of selecting delegations to the world congress that truly reflect the world movement.

This was a problem at the last world congress. Many of the *delegates* had not read the resolutions before they arrived, much less the ranks of the International. The congress was told that Comrade Hugo Blanco, who was then still in prison, supported the guerrilla warfare resolution. This was a mistake that Comrade Blanco rectified when he had an opportunity to study the resolution; but it had an effect on the world congress. Many of the documents had not been translated even into French—to say nothing of Spanish, German, or Japanese. Many of the Latin American comrades had not had a chance to read the key documents on Latin America. This was not due to ill will or malfeasance on the part of anyone. But it says something about the preparation—or lack of it—of the last world congress. The worst thing that could happen would be a repetition of this.

Trotsky's concept of the International was an International with a rich internal life, involving every cadre of the party, an internal life based on written material available to all members in their own language so they could form educated and intelligent judgments which could have a bearing on the decisions made in the world movement.

Jim Cannon has pointed out that the masthead of the first issue of *The Militant* in November 1928 carried this quote from Lenin: "It is necessary that every member of party should study calmly and with the greatest objectivity, first the substance of the differences of opinion, and then the development of the struggles within the party. Neither the one nor the other can be done unless the documents of both sides are published. He who takes somebody's word for it is a hopeless idiot, who can be disposed of with a simple gesture of the hand." If any leadership ever tells you to trust them alone to decide, throw them out. They're untrustworthy.

## For Clarity, not Factionalism

We reject the idea that the differences as they have evolved thus far are such that it is inevitable that new events and tests can only deepen them. At a certain stage in a deepening faction fight, one must draw the opposite conclusion. For example, we drew that conclusion as the Burnham-Shachtman-Abern fight evolved. At a certain stage it became clear that the developing differences were so deep and so fundamental that the only remaining task was to show how they were reflected at all levels—on politics, on sociology, on philosophy. This was necessary to gain the maximum clarity in case a split did take place.

However, in our judgment, whether they realize it consciously or not, leaders of the IMG and the PRT (Combattiente) have been acting as if they were driving toward a split. Once you take certain steps, you set certain forces in motion, whether you want to or not. Such a course

leads to dead-end factionalism. It leads to the attitude that you don't have to read what people say because you know they're wrong, not because of what they say, but because of who they are.

Don't forget for a moment that the overwhelming majority of the comrades of the Fourth International were not even members at the last world congress. Don't forget that the overwhelming majority of the comrades of the Fourth International have never seen the documents of the last world congress. Don't forget that the overwhelming majority of the members of the Fourth International have not yet heard the facts about what has happened in Bolivia, what has happened in Argentina, and the different evaluations. Overcoming this is the task before us in the coming months.

Far from new events leading to new divisions, we think it is possible that new events, new information, and further discussions can clarify the questions, can lead comrades to form different opinions, and lay the groundwork for moving forward together.

We have no doubts about the seriousness and importance of the problems facing the International today. The SWP, I think, understands its own dependence on internationalism. We understand as well as anyone that the American revolution can be touched off by the powderkegs of world revolution which our ruling class is trying vainly to defuse. The development of the American class struggle is affected by economic, social, and political events on a world scale. Only a world party can adequately analyze these processes, understand them, draw lessons from them, and help guide our practice. Far from dispensing with internationalism and an International, we need it the most just because the U. S. is the biggest imperialist power.

We want to do everything we can to deepen our internationalism. We want to study and understand the big issues of world politics. We want to try and get the collective thought of the comrades around the world in the coming period. We want to do everything we can technically to help with translations, to get the documents out, to make the discussion in the Fourth International a real world party discussion of the kind Trotsky envisioned. We want to increase the trips made by leaders of our party to other parts of the world to convey the views of the SWP and learn firsthand the situations other comrades face. For example, a comrade will be going to the Middle East and India soon. There's a comrade right now in Japan. Other comrades are going to go to Africa, to the West Indies, to Australia and New Zealand. At the invitation of the British comrades, several people are going to Britain to take part in a cadre school there. We hope to have comrades who have been most involved in the Latin American discussion go to every single country in Europe to talk to comrades and tell them what we believe the facts are and discuss these with them. These are the kind of trips we want to increase, and the kind we hope will be reciprocated to the maximum.

We want to maximize the campaigns the International has decided on such as the Vietnam campaign and the defense of Argentine political prisoners. We want to do whatever is possible to build support in this country for the imprisoned Ceylonese militants. We want to continue collaborating with the comrades in Europe, Asia, Latin America, and Africa on women's liberation work. We will

use the resources of our party as much as possible to collaborate with the world movement in carrying out these campaigns. And most of all, we intend to have our entire party involved in and thinking about the problems of building the world Trotskyist movement.

Even on the level of contacting and working with the large numbers of international students in this country, there is a tremendous amount of activity that every branch and local can be doing.

To the leadership of the French Ligue Communiste especially, I think I can say for everyone here, that we want to involve your entire membership as well as our entire membership in this process. We understand why the French party, with so many difficult problems to solve because of its rapid growth, was slow in beginning to translate the documents of the International discussion. We understand why many of them have not yet been published in French. But we want to collaborate with you in getting them to your entire membership as we are getting them to our entire membership. We want to urge you to use the tremendous authority which you've earned in Europe, by your size and by your achievements, to help further the political discussion. We hope you will work together with us to help destroy absurd non-Marxist concepts such as a "European method" as counterposed to an "American method" or a "Latin American method." This is the kind of thing that gets in the way of discussion, which closes minds rather than opening them.

We want to say to the comrades of the IMG and the PRT(Combatiente), especially, that we are against factionalism. We have had and continue to have very deep political differences with the leaderships of your organizations, but we consider you comrades like any other. We

will circulate the views you submit to the International Discussion Bulletin and discuss these with you. We are against all organizational reprisals, not only against our allies, but against comrades with whom we disagree. We think the coming world congress should be marked not by expulsions but by political clarity and debate.

We say to the ranks of the entire International, to every comrade in every section: We are exactly the same as you. We have been shaped by the same general experiences. We are of the same epoch. We have the same backgrounds. We reached Trotskyism by similar paths. And we have the same goals. What we want to do is learn from you and with you, as well as present our own ideas and work with you on a day-by-day basis.

Our fundamental concepts have not changed one iota since Trotsky wrote the Transitional Program in 1938, when he said, "The Fourth International does not search after and does not invent panaceas. It takes its stand completely on Marxism as the only revolutionary doctrine that enables one to understand reality, unearth the cause behind the defeats and consciously prepare for victory. The Fourth International continues the tradition of Bolshevism which first showed the proletariat to conquer power. . . . To face reality squarely; not to seek the line of least resistance; to call things by their right names; to speak the truth to the masses, no matter how bitter it may be; not to fear obstacles; to be true in little things as in big ones; to base one's program on the logic of the class struggle; to be bold when the hour for action arrives—these are the rules of the Fourth International."

And these are the rules on which we Trotskyists of the United States continue to stand.

# An Evaluation of the December 1972 IEC Plenum

## Report to the New York city-wide membership meeting of the Socialist Workers Party on February 9, 1973

By Jack Barnes

[The following report was given to a New York city-wide membership meeting of the Socialist Workers Party on February 9, 1973.]

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The Local Executive Committee asked me to give a report to this city conference on the recent plenary meeting of the International Executive Committee (IEC) of the Fourth International. I am happy to accept this invitation and take the opportunity to lay out the views of the Political Committee of the Socialist Workers Party on the discussion and ideological struggle in the International. There is a great deal of ground to cover, and this report will assume that the comrades have read all the documents on the international discussion up to now. If I leave out something or assume too much, comrades should feel free to ask anything in the question period.

The IEC is roughly the parallel body formally to the National Committee of the SWP or the YSA, that is, the body elected to meet between congresses. The IEC held its last meeting during the first week of December 1972. Some sections or groups of Trotskyists in the International who do not have members on the IEC were invited to send observers.

The meeting was very well attended. There were comrades present from Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Austria, Holland, Belgium, Luxembourg, France, Italy, Switzerland, Great Britain, Ireland, Greece, Spain, Japan, Mexico, Brazil, Uruguay, Peru, Chile, South Africa, and Canada. There was a comrade from the Chinese section and several comrades from Argentina, representing the two groups there. It was the first time that comrades had attended an IEC meeting from New Zealand, Australia, and Lebanon. And there were fraternal observers there from the United States, where reactionary legislation prevents the American Trotskyists from affiliating to the Fourth International.

Unfortunately neither Comrade Hugo Gonzáles from Bolivia nor Hugo Blanco were able to be there. Nor were comrades from India, Ceylon, or Israel, for instance, able to make it.

As you can see, the representation was much broader than the IEC elected almost four years ago. There was a significant representation as observers of younger comrades in their twenties who are leaders of groups and sections.

The most important points on the agenda were the balance sheets on Argentina and Bolivia. In Argentina and Bolivia the political differences in the International

have been given an almost laboratory-type test, and a big price has been paid, in our opinion, for the errors that have been made flowing from the majority line of the last world congress.

Another important point was Vietnam, which brought a little surprise. For the first time at an International gathering, fundamental political differences appeared over the Vietnam question.

Another point was the resolution on Europe submitted by the United Secretariat majority ("The Building of Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe," International Internal Discussion Bulletin, Vol. IX, No. 5, 1972). On this there were differences also, but these were of a different character than Bolivia and Argentina because the discussion over Europe has really just started. In contrast, the different lines for Argentina and Bolivia have been tested in action for several years, and the differences over Vietnam involve a revolutionary struggle which has been going on for many years, and in which the entire international movement has been involved as part of the international solidarity and defense work.

The final point on the agenda was the organization of the coming world congress of the Fourth International. Here also important differences emerged.

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The leadership of the Socialist Workers Party thinks the IEC discussion on Bolivia and Argentina revealed a deepening of the differences in the Fourth International. It denoted the appearance of a crisis in the world Trotskyist movement. Far from backing off from erroneous positions that have cost heavily in missed opportunities and even in the lives of cadres in those two countries, the IEC majority plunged deeper into error. This course is based on their schematic analysis of the class struggle in Latin America and their adoption of guerrilla warfare as the strategy for the entire Latin American continent.

On Vietnam, we think we are seeing the consequences of several years of lack of clarity over political principles in relation to that question in the leaderships of several of the European sections. Differences of principle have developed over support to the seven-point program of the Provisional Revolutionary Government, the cease-fire accords, and the "Sign Now" demand in regard to the U.S. imperialist-imposed accords. There are also major differences over the evaluation of the Vietnamese Communist Party. We believe that this is basically a continuation of the difference over Stalinism that appeared in

connection with the China discussion at the last world congress. There are also differences over antiwar work and over evaluating the present political conjuncture in Vietnam as a result of the cease-fire accords.

The document *Argentina and Bolivia — the Balance Sheet* (IIDB, Vol. X, No. 1), by Hugo Blanco, Peter Camejo, Joseph Hansen, Anibal Lorenzo, and Nahuel Moreno, called for the formation of an ideological tendency whose goal is reversal of the guerrillaist course adopted by the last world congress; reversal of its extension geographically and programmatically; and for a return to the application of the method of the Transitional Program and the Leninist strategy of party building.

A countertendency was called for during the IEC by 19 IEC members led by Livio Maitan, Ernest Mandel, and Pierre Frank. This tendency call included as its basis reaffirmation of the line on Latin America adopted by the last world congress and support to the line of the European document, the "Building of Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe." The comrades who supported this position called for centralizing the organizational structure and leadership of the International, but they opposed postponement of the world congress, which we feel is the only way to insure a full democratic discussion and thus an authoritative world congress. The decision not to postpone the world congress was a grave error. We fear that driving ahead to hold a world congress on the current timetable without adequate discussion can only result in further deepening the crisis in the Fourth International and weakening the authority of its elected leadership.

In light of the decision by the majority of the IEC to move ahead to a late summer world congress, the National Committee of the SWP has called the national convention of the party to take place at the end of the first week in August. That means that the preconvention discussion for the party convention will open around the first week in May, three months before the convention, in accordance with the norm specified by our constitution. But in addition the National Committee has decided to open up the discussion bulletin to all members of the SWP who want to make written contributions on the disputed questions in the International prior to the opening of the preconvention discussion on other issues.

This report should be understood within a certain framework. We're prevented from formally affiliating to the Fourth International because of the laws in this country. At the same time, we consider ourselves to be a part of the world Trotskyist movement and we are in political solidarity with the Fourth International. This has been our position from the beginning and we identify with the International as much as anyone and express our point of view on all issues under discussion.

## Bolivia and Argentina

About seven or eight months before the IEC, we proposed that Bolivia and Argentina be put on the agenda as the central two points. The reason is obvious. At the last world congress we were told that the comrades in Bolivia were in the best position to begin carrying out the strategy of guerrilla warfare as the way to make rapid gains for the International and advance the class struggle. And it has been in Bolivia that an entire spec-

trum of situations developed, all the way from a brutal military dictatorship to a military reformist regime, to mass mobilizations and a prerevolutionary situation. After years of struggle and repression, the actual possibility emerged of the workers and peasants seizing power, wresting it from the hands of the exploiters, and establishing a workers state in Bolivia. The activity of the Bolivian section in this situation offers a good test of the validity of the line adopted at the last world congress.

The second key point was Argentina. There, as in Bolivia, a prerevolutionary situation opened up. But in Argentina there were two parties in the International. The official section, the PRT (Combatiente), was determined to try to carry out the line of guerrilla warfare adopted at the last world congress. The sympathizing group of the Fourth International, the PRT(Verdad) rejected that line and put forward an approach to party building that is much closer to what we think is correct. So Argentina offers a test of the two contending lines in practice, as carried out by the PRT(C) and the PRT(Verdad).

The leadership of the world movement has a heavy responsibility to weigh what happened in these two countries. It is normal for disagreements to appear in the International and for the course of events to decide who is right and who is wrong. If the different positions are tested by events, however, and still no agreement can be reached on who was right and who was wrong, then you have a very grave problem.

So both of the Argentine groups were invited to the IEC. The comrades of the PRT(Combatiente) sent one delegate, Comrade Nicolas. The comrades of the PRT(Verdad), which is now the PST (Partido Socialista de las Trabajadores), which you've been reading about in *The Militant* and *Intercontinental Press*, sent four delegates, including Hugo Moreno and Anibal Lorenzo.

It had been decided seven months beforehand that Livio Maitan would prepare a balance sheet on Bolivia for the IEC. The comrades who were part of the majority of the United Secretariat elected at the last world congress also agreed to present a document on Argentina. But on the eve of the IEC neither one of these documents had been written.

As a result, the document of Comrades Blanco, Camejo, Hansen, Lorenzo and Moreno, presented by the United Secretariat minority, was *de facto* the central document, even though it was only distributed at the United Secretariat meeting on the eve of the IEC. Ironically, the document of the United Secretariat majority, put forward during the IEC, seemed more like a counter-document to that of the minority.

The document we supported first reviewed the differences that existed at the last world congress.

A central difference was over perspective: would the pattern for revolutionary upsurge in Latin America be fundamentally rural guerrilla warfare for an extended period of time on a continental scale; or would the revolutionary upsurge more and more tend to be centered in the big cities among the urban proletariat and their allies? It was our opinion that the latter perspective was the more likely one. The uprising in the Dominican Republic in 1965, the massive struggles in Mexico City in 1968, and the defeat and death of Che Guevara and the defeat of other guerrilla fronts all pointed to the fact

that Castroist guerrillaism had about run its course. There was more and more evidence, given the economic and political situation, that the cities would be the centers of the revolutionary upsurge.

What happened? In the three places, following the last world congress, where prerevolutionary situations appeared — Chile, Bolivia, and Argentina — they were urban-centered and overwhelmingly proletarian.

There were other differences of perspective and line that were quite important. One was the difference between emphasizing technical preparation for armed struggle versus applying the Transitional Program. Another was the difference between understanding armed struggle as growing out of the mass movement and not as an autonomous activity of the party to be somehow linked up to, injected into, or fastened onto the mass struggle at some stage by a relatively small nucleus. The third difference was over the degree to which the majority refused to accept the fact that there would be variations in the development of the class struggle in Latin America. We held that there would be democratic interludes and reformist regimes which would offer openings, if only for brief periods of time, for intervention in mass organizations and participation in legal or quasilegal struggles. We said they were wrong in ruling this out for all practical purposes. The fourth difference was over the degree to which they began downgrading democratic demands, including demands for land reform, in favor of maximum demands.

One difference was emphasized very strongly by Hugo Blanco. That is the difference between seeing guerrilla warfare as a strategy (which leads more and more to its becoming the primary focus of activity as opposed to party building) and seeing it as a tactic that can be used at one or another time by a revolutionary party involved in mass struggle. Is the task of the Fourth International in Latin America today to build parties as instruments to lead the masses to power, or is it to build instruments to begin the technical preparation of armed struggle?

Underlying the support many comrades gave to the line adopted at the last world congress was the great desire and impatience to see a "breakthrough." Many of the comrades will remember reading the article by Livio Maitan where he said, "Permit me to express myself a little paradoxically: it is necessary to understand and to explain that at the present stage the International will be built around Bolivia" ("*An Insufficient Document*," IIB collected *Discussion on Latin America*, 1968-72, p 11-16). We consider this to be a dangerous method — to predict a big breakthrough, act as if your prediction is bound to come true, and then throw everything into the single path that you ordain that the masses are bound to take. The unpredictability of the ups and downs in the class struggle usually upset the best-laid schemas.

## The Lesson of Argentina

On Bolivia, Livio Maitan was the reporter to the IEC for the majority of the United Secretariat, and Anibal Lorenzo was the reporter to the IEC for the position of the minority of the secretariat.

What happened in Bolivia was exactly what we had feared might. The idea that legal work was impossible, or that there would be no reformist experience, was shot

down when the masses began moving, opening the way first to the Ovando regime, then to the Torres regime. The Revolutionary Workers Party (POR), the section of the Fourth International in Bolivia, was headed in the opposite direction when this happened. It was concentrating on preparation to engage in guerrilla warfare which it hoped would stimulate a mass upsurge. Far from being prepared for the mass upsurge, the POR was confused and shaken as a result of its concentration on the guerrilla perspective. In our opinion, the POR missed the boat on all the openings that arose. This included the development of the Political Command, the Popular Assembly, and the growing mass struggles.

Instead of seeing the tremendous opportunity and understanding it in time, the comrades of the POR saw the mass upsurge as something bound to be defeated. In their eyes its main value seemed to be that it gave them time to prepare the technical apparatus for guerrilla warfare that would come when an inevitable defeat took place.

Secondly, at every stage of the mass struggle they made the ultraleft error of counterposing ideal but imaginary institutions and organizations to active intervention in the imperfect mass organizations that actually existed. Instead of trying to join the Political Command, which led the workers' struggles, and fighting for leadership there, they turned their backs on it and called for a *revolutionary* political command, which, of course, never came into being. Instead of working with the soldiers in the army and attempting to win them over to the workers struggle, they called on the soldiers to desert and join the *revolutionary* army. There was one small catch; the revolutionary army didn't exist. When the Popular Assembly developed, with the potential for becoming a soviet, the POR took an aloof attitude until the last minute.

In our opinion these errors were topped off by the unprincipled error of joining the Anti-imperialist Revolutionary Front (FRA), following the defeat in Bolivia signaled by the Banzer coup. The FRA encompassed those very organizations which the comrades were incapable of working within united front activity during the revolutionary upsurge. But they united with them afterwards around a program that was, to say the least, confused on the role of the bourgeoisie in the Bolivian revolution. (Even General Torres was part of the FRA at the outset.) The reformists and Stalinists in the FRA are only too eager to talk about guerrilla warfare today to distract attention from the fact that they refused to take power when they had the chance yesterday. By participating in the FRA after the defeat, the POR helps it appear as if these betrayers of the Bolivian revolution are now genuinely interested in taking power. What the POR should be doing today is exposing these betrayers, not covering up for them.

This, we felt, was the real five-year balance sheet on Bolivia very clearly presented by Comrade Lorenzo. The necessary evidence to prove the case is detailed in the "Balance Sheet" document.

Livio, on the other hand, reporting to the IEC for the United Secretariat majority, fundamentally defended the POR's course in Bolivia. He said that the comrades to the best of their ability attempted to carry out in practice the line adopted at the last world congress. In other words, he reaffirmed that line. ("*Bolivia — Results and Perspectives*," IIB, Vol. X, No. 6, pp. 5-12.) If the com-

rades will read, not only the "Balance Sheet" document, but the article by Comrade Lorenzo (International Information Bulletin No. 3 in 1972), the article by Hugo Moreno in the February 1973 *International Socialist Review*, and Peter Camejo's pamphlet on the Guevarist strategy, you'll have a good idea of our opinion as to what happened in Bolivia and the lessons to draw from that experience.

## The Lesson of Bolivia

Comrade Livio was once again the reporter on the debate on Argentina for the United Secretariat majority. Comrade Nicolas gave a separate report for the PRT (Combatiente). Comrade Hugo Moreno of the PST in Argentina gave a report representing the views of the minority of the United Secretariat.

Comrade Moreno's report paralleled the "Balance Sheet" document. He detailed the history of the rise of the mass struggle in Argentina and the development of the PST. He described the PST's insistence on orienting to the masses—preparing for the legal opening it knew was coming and preparing for increased opportunities to do union work and student work, and its use of the Transitional Program to recruit and develop political cadres.

Comrade Livio's oral report fundamentally defended the PRT-ERP's course in Argentina, although he differentiated himself from some of its extreme positions. He criticized the PRT's support for the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia; their idea that Castroism is a higher synthesis of Maoism and Trotskyism, both of which they consider to be continuations of Leninism; and the notion that an international really cannot be built unless it includes the Albanian, North Korean, and Chinese Communist parties. But Comrade Livio explicitly reaffirmed the line of the last world congress and its guerrillaist application by the PRT-ERP, much of which, in his opinion, was in the tradition of the Bolsheviks.

Comrades may remember that a year after the last world congress, Comrade Hugo Blanco wrote a very concerned letter to Comrade Livio, which Livio answered. Blanco's concern was that this guerrillaist deviation was going to destroy the Argentine movement. Comrade Livio replied that "in the fundamental documents of *El Combatiente* which I have read, there are no 'guerrillerista' deviations." Both of these letters are in the IIB collected *Discussion on Latin American (1968-1971)*.

Livio raised two new points in his report that escalate the errors he and the other comrades in his tendency have made on Argentina. One is that he said he believes the Sallustro kidnapping was politically correct. He felt there were a few tactical errors made toward the end, when too much money was asked for and Sallustro was killed. But the kidnapping itself, and the political concept behind it, was correct and he wanted to go on record as stating that.

The second new point he made was that he considers the meat and milk hijackings, the Sallustro kidnapping, the formation of armed guerrilla units, the assassination of Sanchez, etc., to be positive examples. And in the document passed by a majority at this IEC, it was stated that certain ERP actions, which supposedly combined armed struggle and mass struggle, "rose to a high level of armed struggle, the highest attained in Latin America

since the Cuban revolution. . . ." Leaving aside the fantastic character of that judgment, it means the Maitan-Mandel-Frank grouping now definitively put this experience not only ahead of the armed mass resistance in Santo Domingo in 1965 but also ahead of the experience and lessons of Hugo Blanco and his comrades in the armed struggle in Peru. These statements were further extensions of their position on Latin America that I had never heard before.

Comrades should briefly note the fundamental positions of the PRT-ERP: their support of the Tupamaros, their objection to the construction of Trotskyist parties in countries like Uruguay where groups such as the Tupamaros exist; their objection to building a Trotskyist party in China, because they think Mao is a revolutionary; their concept that armed minority actions are the prime task for revolutionists in Argentina; and their willingness to unite with the Peronist armed groups on the basis of armed struggle despite the bourgeois character of Peronism.

Let me summarize the positions of the PRT-ERP on international questions:

1. Trotsky is a revolutionist, but only one among others like Mao, General Giap, Kim Il Sung, Ho Chi Minh, and above all Che Guevara, from whom the PRT-ERP have drawn their ideas.

2. The Fourth International has to be recognized as having revolutionary aims, but it includes counterrevolutionary adventurers.

3. It is dubious that the Fourth International can be saved for the revolution.

4. Other parties like the Albanian, Chinese, and North Korean Communist parties are equally revolutionary.

5. A new international must be built that would include all these parties.

6. The Cuban Communist Party is hailed as a model. The PRT already subscribes to its political leadership, while still retaining nominal ties to the Fourth International.

7. It may be possible to establish fraternal ties with other workers states besides Cuba (that is, a Trotskyist international establishing fraternal ties with Stalinist regimes).

8. The Kremlin's invasion of Czechoslovakia was correct and in the best interests of socialism.

One might ask what the comrades in Czechoslovakia would think of the PRT(C)'s position. It's one thing to have differences; it's another thing to be on different sides of the barricades during a political revolution.

Comrade Nicolas of the PRT-ERP, who spoke frankly—as the PRT(C) comrades almost always do, because they believe in what they say—also reaffirmed unambiguously to the entire IEC that both the *Unico Camino* document (*The Only Road to Workers Power and Socialism*) adopted at the PRT's fourth congress in 1968 (IIDB, Vol. IX, No. 4) and the resolutions adopted at their fifth congress in 1970 (IIDB, Vol. X, No. 5) are still their positions. He reinforced this by using some of his presentation to read sections of *El Unico Camino* to the IEC.

The criticisms voiced in the "Balance Sheet" document by Comrades Blanco, Camejo, Hansen, Lorenzo, and Moreno are based on documents from unimpeachable sources, including documents of the PRT-ERP and statements by Comrade Livio and the other leaders of the

majority of the Secretariat. But the majority of the IEC rejected the general line of the document.

In our opinion, the position on Bolivia and Argentina adopted by the majority of the IEC marks a new stage in the crisis of the leadership of the Fourth International.

## The Record of the PST

Equally disturbing was the IEC majority's position on the question of the PST in Argentina. At the end of the document on Argentina approved by the majority (IIDB, Vol. X, No. 6), point 14 stated that "the world congress must draw up a balance sheet of the group recognized by the Ninth Congress as a sympathizing organization. It can only be a negative one." They are referring to the *La Verdad* group, now the PST.

Here's how they draw up this balance sheet. This is the totality of their contribution so far on the work of the *La Verdad* group, the PST.

1. They say that "the *La Verdad* group has applied a line opposed to the one adopted by the Ninth Congress."

Thank goodness. How that can be negative is beyond me in light of what has happened in practice. At the last world congress the supporters of the Latin America document insisted it was *not* incumbent on every section in Latin America to apply its line. That was a tactical decision for the sections. Have they changed their mind on this?

2. "It has developed a policy opposed to that of the Argentine section of the International, from which it has taken its distance at crucial moments."

They are referring to the PRT-ERP. If the PST wanted to survive and build a party it had no choice. There is no debate over the fact that the policies of the PRT-ERP and PST were opposed. Who was more correct?

3. "It has conceived of its relationship with the International in a factional way."

This means, I presume, that members of the PST met with members of the United Secretariat minority, their press republished articles from *The Militant*, and they co-authored, after political discussions, a tendency document countering the line of the last world congress. A more important question, in our opinion, is whether the majority of the International leadership has considered *its* relationship to the PST in a factional way.

4. "In its press, it has publicly attacked other Latin American sections as well as leaders of the International by name, whose guilt was that they defended the orientations set by the World Congress."

This refers to the fact that public articles signed by Livio Maitan and Ernest Mandel are cited critically in Lorenzo's article, "The Lessons of Bolivia" (IIB No. 3 in 1972), which first appeared as a public article in an Argentine magazine.

5. "... *La Verdad* has adopted clearly opportunist attitudes, showing thereby that it has not overcome the traditional failings of the Moreno group."

That's like original sin. No. The comrades must prove the opportunism of the PST first; then trace its "bad seed." Not vice versa.

6. "This grouping, which went from sectarian positions in 1951 to a line of merging opportunistically into the Peronist movement at the time of *Palabra Obrero*. . . ."

Now all of a sudden we're taken twenty-two years back into the past. The disturbing thing is that this goes clear back before the 1953 division in the Trotskyist movement. One wonders why they go back so far. Livio objects to our referring to his positions on Egypt in the mid-60s, but he doesn't hesitate to go back to 1951 on Moreno. What does the supposed deviation have to do with the balance sheet since the last world congress?

7. This grouping ". . . oscillated between making conservative and bookish criticisms of Guevarism and giving unconditional support to Inti Peredo's guerrillas, even advocating a strict adherence to the discipline of OLAS, and which bore the main responsibility for the split in 1968, has confirmed its fundamental lack of comprehension of the needs of armed struggle in the present stage of the class struggle in Argentina."

The comrades supporting *La Verdad*, under the influence of the Cuban revolution and the desire to take whatever course was necessary to advance the revolution in Argentina, *did* put forth some of those ideas. They *did* propose at one time that collaboration, even disciplined participation in OLAS, would be a good thing. But they did something else. They recognized this was a mistake. They learned from it and by the time of the last world congress they urged the comrades not to take that course. It is especially ironical that the United Secretariat majority makes this criticism because at the last world congress the document adopted on Latin America, which Comrade Moreno opposed, urged us to integrate ourselves into OLAS! (IIDB collected *Discussion on Latin America, 1968-72*, p. 50).

8. "It was quick to seek electoral registration when even the ultra-opportunist Communist Party of Argentina hesitated to accept these conditions, and thereby objectively gave a left cover to the dictatorship's insidious maneuver."

I leave aside the implied guilt by association except to say that I would expect the ultra-opportunist Communist Party to be one of the last to see important opportunities for revolutionists. It was to the credit of the *La Verdad* leadership, acting like a Leninist political organization, that it was the first revolutionary group in Argentina, and the first in the world to my knowledge, to clearly see that in spite of the military dictatorship the upsurge of mass struggles was forcing the ruling class to make concessions in the form of openings for legal activity and ultimately an election.

The key for a revolutionary organization, even though they were all underground, including the comrades of *La Verdad*, was to work in the unions and on the campuses to be prepared for this opening. It was important to be ready to take advantage of the legality for as long as it existed in order to maximize recruitment and their influence in the mass movement. Far from drawing a negative balance sheet on this experience we should consider it one of the major accomplishments of the *La Verdad* organization in the past period.

The assertion that utilizing the opportunity for some legal work provided a left cover for the dictatorship's masquerade is absurd. That's like saying that the election campaign of the underground Bolshevik party in 1912 provided left cover for the czar's phony attempt to make the Duma appear to be a real parliament.

9. "And finally—also for electoralist purposes—[the *La*



*Verdad* grouping] agreed to a political and organizational fusion with the PSA-Coral tendency, which has never had the slightest significance influence in the working class." It may be true that the Argentine Socialist Party led by Comrade Coral didn't have much influence in the working class, although Coral is a well-known figure. That's irrelevant. The opportunity to fuse with another group on a principled basis around a class-struggle program came up. The comrades grabbed it to get the opening that has finally come today. If one agreed with the position of the United Secretariat majority, one would have to ask some questions about the SWP's history, particularly its fusion with A.J. Muste's party and the entry into Norman Thomas's Socialist Party in the 1930s.

There was never any question that the Trotskyist cadres were the dominant force in the Argentine fusion. That was shown beyond doubt when the PST was formed a few weeks ago on a Trotskyist program unanimously proclaiming its allegiance to the Fourth International.

10. "It is in the name of this party [the PSA] that its members are now operating, making the elections the central axis of their activity and developing an opportunist and tail-ending conception of building the party."

When this was being written, Comrade Livio may not have known that at the convention held the following week the name was going to be changed to the Socialist Workers Party of Argentina (PST). But leave that aside.

The criticism that this party is making their election campaign the central focus of their activity could also be said of us during most of the past presidential campaign and of the New York city-wide organization in the coming months. Electoralism is different from using elections to advance one's revolutionary activities and program.

It is important for revolutionists to take advantage of electoral opportunities, especially if, as in Argentina, this activity opens up an opportunity to gain influence and forces in the labor movement. Read very carefully the articles appearing in *The Militant* and *Intercontinental Press* about the character of the PST candidates. These include unionists and leaders of the great strike wave that occurred there. If this is an error, then we need more errors like this.

11. "At the time of the Uruguayan elections, [*La Verdad*] confirmed its rightist conceptions by supporting the Frente Amplio, led by the bourgeois Liber Seregni."

That, of course, is false. As the comrades know from reading *Intercontinental Press*, we also thought the Uruguayan comrades made an error in calling for a vote for the candidates of the Frente Amplio. But their entire campaign was directed *against* the program of the Frente Amplio, explaining precisely why it would lead the Uruguayan workers into a trap. To say in an unqualified way they supported the Frente Amplio is a distortion of the truth.

That's the end of the "balance sheet" on the *La Verdad* organization. The attack made on these points is not supported by a single piece of corroborating evidence. That's the totality of the proposed position of the Fourth International on the balance sheet of four years of work by the *La Verdad* organization. It's on the basis of this balance sheet that one is supposed to write off the PST

and to support, at the least critically, the PRT-ERP. To paraphrase Comrade Livio, that's an "insufficient balance sheet."

## The IEC Majority's Self-Criticism

At the end of the discussion on Argentina, Comrade Sandor made a statement of self-criticism on behalf of those IEC members who voted for the general line of the Latin American resolution at the 1969 world congress. (IIDB Vol. X, No. 6.) The statement says, "It was correct after the Ninth World Congress to stress active solidarity with the courageous struggle of the Argentine section. . . ."

I believe that's true. I believe it's correct to stress solidarity with any section or group of Trotskyists around the world when they are attacked, whether we agree with everything they do or not. Anything else is criminal. But stressing solidarity was never what we objected to. What we have opposed is adapting to the politics that helped lead to such disastrous results.

The statement says that the PRT-ERP experience "has enriched the experience of the entire Trotskyist movement. . . ." If the experience of the PRT-ERP has enriched the experience of the Trotskyist movement, it has enriched it by teaching us a horribly costly lesson about what *not* to do.

They go on to say that it has "increased sympathy for Trotskyism among the international revolutionary vanguard." I don't know what that is supposed to mean. I notice that the Maoist *Guardian* gives favorable coverage to the ERP. This experience has not increased sympathy for Trotskyism, it has increased confusion over what Trotskyism is.

They go on: "It was likewise correct to condemn the public attacks launched by tendencies in the Fourth International against the tragic aspects of the activity of our Argentine section." We believe, in more blunt words, that the loss of life of young Argentine comrades, which flowed from the politics carried out after the last world congress, was tragic. But according to them, one of the most tragic things about it was that the SWP, in an issue of *The Militant*, differentiated itself politically from the errors that led to this and were going to continue to lead to more of this.

They go on: "But the comrades who voted for the Latin American resolution at the Ninth World Congress committed an error in not opening up a fraternal discussion sooner in our movement on the ideological positions of the Argentine section, in particular, on Maoism, the military intervention in Czechoslovakia, and the road toward building a mass revolutionary International, positions with which we are in complete disagreement. These comrades hereby promise to begin a discussion on these questions with the Argentine comrades and throughout the International, in the context of preparing for the Tenth World Congress."

It strikes me as a bit late for that, although better late than never. Comrades will have to read the resolutions for themselves to see how far the self-criticism goes.

On the other side, just as with Comrade Lorenzo's report on Bolivia, one of the great pleasures of the Argentine point was to hear Comrade Moreno. We've been debating Argentina for a long time in the world movement.

But to hear an Argentine Trotskyist leader with decades of experience, who's lived through the struggles of the last five years, explaining and laying out the entire record of accomplishment of the PST, was a pleasurable experience.

The reports and discussion on Latin America lasted three days. A majority of the comrades, many of the same comrades who voted for the Latin American resolution at the last world congress, voted to adopt the reports and resolutions on Bolivia and Argentina presented by Comrade Livio. We were in solidarity with the comrades who voted to adopt the Bolivia and Argentina sections of the balance sheet document, as presented by Comrade Lorenzo and Comrade Moreno.

## The Vietnam Discussion

Vietnam, like Bolivia and Argentina, was also a crucial question at the IEC. If Bolivia and Argentina are acid tests for parties of the Fourth International, Vietnam has certainly been the key question in world politics and the world class struggle today.

Comrade Walter presented the report on Vietnam for the majority of the United Secretariat, and he stated that Comrade Clarissa, a leader of the International Marxist Group in Britain, and Comrade Sterne, a leader of the Ligue Communiste, would supplement his report.

Clarissa indicated that he's against a political revolution in North Vietnam. He also stated that he doesn't think a party involved in leading a revolution can be classified as Stalinist. This would mean the Vietnamese, Chinese, and I assume the Yugoslav Communist parties. I don't know who else would be inclined in that category. I'm sure he will expand on these points in the written pre-world congress discussion.

Comrade Sterne made two points that should be noted. He reiterated his view that it was correct to give political support to the PRG's seven-point peace plan and to the nine-point accords, and to make "Sign the Accords Now" a fundamental demand of the antiwar movement. Secondly, he said that the SWP has been wrong all along in not raising the slogan "Victory to the NLF." I mention this because I never heard the second point officially presented before and because I wanted you to know that the people you have argued and fought with all these years in the antiwar movement in this country are not the only ones in the world who hold those positions.

This difference has a history which I'd like to outline. From the very beginning of the antiwar struggle, we've felt there was a difference with the majority of the leading comrades in France and on the United Secretariat over whether our policy in the antiwar movement should be to concentrate on the so-called vanguard, or whether we should build a movement whose goal and method of operation and slogans are designed to bring masses into the streets against the imperialist war in Vietnam. Soon after the Ninth World Congress, Comrade Krivine told us that the "vanguard" in France was tired of marching. We told him we had also heard the same thing from "vanguard" types in this country and that it was possibly true. The so-called vanguard is often tired of a lot of things, but the Vietnamese weren't tired yet, and in spite of this "vanguard" we had an important responsibility to reach beyond them to the masses in order to get U. S. impe-

rialism off the backs of the Vietnamese.

This was a running informal discussion between us. In our opinion, there was a tendency after the last world congress to stop building big mobilizations in Europe. This was especially unfortunate because of the success that the comrades in Britain had had helping to turn out mass demonstrations in 1967 and 1968, proving that such antiwar actions could be built in countries that did not have troops in Vietnam.

This difference came to a head at an IEC meeting in December 1969, when Comrade Germain presented a political report that included the Vietnam point. (See IIDB reprint for 1968-1971.) He presented the idea that the international antiwar movement has two different origins and functions: inside the United States people are directly affected by the war and demonstrations can have a direct impact on the war; but outside the United States, he said, the antiwar movement "is essentially a political vanguard movement." He said that in the United States, "it is a thousand times more important to have one million people in the streets for the immediate withdrawal of the American troops than to present a more radical image of ourselves before a few hundred persons." To do otherwise, he said, would be "to place foremost a factional interest in trying to increase [the SWP's] own forces by appearing in the most radical image possible among the small radicalized circles in the United States" instead of building a movement that could have an impact on the war.

We told him at that IEC meeting that we agreed with that strategy for the U. S. but that his thesis about sacrificing any recruitment was absurd. We explained that we wouldn't have recruited more Trotskyists even if we had put forward a more "radical" image. To the contrary.

The second mistake we thought was the idea that "for French revolutionists, Italian revolutionists, German revolutionists there does not exist any possibility of making an immediate, direct contribution to the victory of the South Vietnamese revolution, except by making an immediate victorious socialist revolution in their own country." We thought this was wrong, rather maximalist. It was the totality of the international antiwar movement, not simply the antiwar movement of the United States, that affected the American ruling class to the degree it could be affected. If those eight years in Europe had been spent not in trying to orient to the "vanguard" but in trying to organize mass demonstrations in which attempts were made to convince the radicalized elements of this correct line, the results may well have been different in Europe from what they were.

About a year and a half ago, a change occurred which we were very happy about. The Swedish and French comrades reversed the tendency to downplay antiwar actions and began the work of rebuilding the antiwar movement. The last couple of antiwar actions have been international and have included significant demonstrations in Europe.

Another difference over Vietnam began in late 1971. When we saw *Rouge* begin giving political support to the seven-point peace program of the PRG, we could hardly believe our eyes! The comrades had evidently decided that in order to support the Vietnamese revolution they had to politically support the seven-point program. They developed an entire theory about it. I won't try to explain the entire thing in detail. It is a theory you have heard

many times, both in the *Guardian* and from other people you've worked with in the antiwar movement. Comrade Sterne will be writing in the International bulletin on it for the Maitan-Mandel-Frank tendency.

We thought they were mistaken on two counts.

First, it was unprincipled for Trotskyists to support the seven-point program. There is no way we can support a program that calls for a coalition government in which the bourgeoisie participates. That's against our principles. Secondly, we thought it was not tactically the most effective way to mobilize the antiwar movement. The heart of our strategy has been support to the unconditional right of the Vietnamese to settle their own future, and to reject the claim of the imperialists of a right to impose conditions on them, even if they have to themselves retreat under pressure. We had thought these principles were shared by the entire international movement. We had an opportunity to have a lot of informal discussions about this with the French comrades as our comrades participated in various international antiwar gatherings.

At a National Committee Plenum of the Ligue Communiste in October 1972, several of the Ligue leaders including Alain Krivine and Pierre Frank attempted to modify the position taken by *Rouge* on the seven-point program. They tried to point out that there were questions of principle involved. They were voted down overwhelmingly in the Central Committee by a vote of 46 to 6, and support to the seven-point program was reaffirmed. The only possible explanation I can think of for such a lopsided vote was that it was the fruit of a long period of miseducation or lack of clarity on principles. This error had a natural evolution. They went from support of the seven-point program, to support for the ceasefire accords, to "Sign Now." "Sign the Accords Now" was one of the three central demands our French comrades raised on the January 20 demonstration in France!

## The Situation in Vietnam

The third difference was over evaluating the developments occurring right now in Vietnam. Walter and Sterne presented a resolution on this that we voted against (see *Intercontinental Press*, January 15, 1973, or IIDB, Vol. X, No. 6).

There was no disagreement, of course, over recognizing the significance of American imperialism's failure to accomplish what it had set out to do in Vietnam. As President Johnson explained, that goal was to "nail the coonskin to the wall." The arrogant and brutal imperialists who set about to destroy and crush the Vietnamese people with the most massive war machine in history were dealt a blow. And the rest of the world was taught a lesson about the limits to imperialist power. A new attitude developed that can never be completely turned around, no matter what happens. This setback to imperialist power—not the signing of any agreements or any conditions imposed on the Vietnamese—is an inspiration to humanity around the world.

There was no disagreement over the openings the struggle against the war made for us here in the U. S. Nor was there any question about our responsibility to do our utmost to mobilize people as long as U. S. imperialism remains in Vietnam.

But there were deep disagreements. One important disagreement we had was over the passage that reads as follows: "In any event, withdrawal of the U. S. armed forces from Vietnam and cessation of the bombing of both the North and South would constitute a shift in the relationship of forces in favor of the Vietnamese revolution."

Our answer to this is: "not true." You cannot pose the question that way. You have to ask: Is the entire package imposed upon the Vietnamese by Moscow and Peking (and to one degree or another supported by a section of the Vietnamese leadership) of such a character that the withdrawal of the last 27,000 American ground troops and the cessation of the bombing for the time being amounts to a shift in the relationship of forces favorable for the Vietnamese revolution? It's our estimate that it does not.

The demobilizing conditions imposed on the Vietnamese fighters certainly do not indicate a decisive shift in the relationship of forces. At a minimum, that remains to be seen. It depends largely on the capacity of the Vietnamese Communist Party leadership to mobilize the masses in class struggle for the overthrow of the capitalist puppet regime against the agreement and the spirit of reconciliation and concord.

There was also a disagreement over what degree of blame should be ascribed to the Soviet and Chinese bureaucracies. There was of course no disagreement about the criminal policies of both Moscow and Peking in Vietnam; that goes without saying. But we think they underestimated the degree of the betrayal, and the impact this has had on the Vietnamese.

Near the end of the document they refer to "the 'peaceful coexistence' policies of the Soviet and Chinese bureaucracies which substantially contributed to the deterioration of the international relationship of forces in which the Indochinese revolution is unfolding."

We think that "substantial contribution" is much, much too weak. What happened is what *Intercontinental Press* correctly called on its cover at the end of the year, "the great betrayal." It is a betrayal on the scope of the 1939 Stalin-Hitler pact, and the betrayal in Spain. Moscow and China, with their power and authority, forced the Vietnamese to maximize their concessions and pressured them to live up to the conditions imposed by imperialism upon them.

## Dual Power From Top to Bottom?

There's a third difference. The majority IEC document on Vietnam says: "The current situation in South Vietnam is one of dual power from top to bottom." We don't think so. Of course, there is a fundamental reality of two armed camps which face each other. And the two armed camps are based on two different social forces that are irreconcilable in the long run.

But what the situation is *not* is one of dual power from top to bottom. It is not a situation where governmental institutions, institutions like soviets that can take over the rule of Vietnam, occur everywhere from top to bottom, not only in the countryside but in the cities as well. That would be dual power from top to bottom, and it would be a situation that could not last for long.

Such a situation could come into being very rapidly

if there were mass mobilizations of the workers and students in the cities in Vietnam, and mass mobilizations of the peasants in the countryside. But it is not true today. Instead, what we have, for the moment, is a stalemated civil war, with two armed camps facing each other.

The resolution goes on to say: "It is in this context that the question of a 'national coalition' government or structure must be approached." The document says that history offers us examples, like France and Spain in 1936, France, Italy, Greece, Indonesia, and elsewhere after the war, where coalition governments led to the eventual restabilization of a bourgeois regime, stealing from the workers and peasants the things they had fought for. But this "was not the case in Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, and China, where the presence of bourgeois ministers in the central government did not prevent the socialist transformation of the revolutionary process from occurring."

But in Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, and China, the coalition governments were set up *after* the bourgeois army was smashed. If the NLF led the masses of Vietnam in mass uprisings and smashed the Saigon army, consolidated a government, and set up a power to begin carrying out a real land reform in the countryside, and enacted what the workers and refugees in the cities are demanding, and there were one or two bourgeois ministers in that government, these ministers would not have to represent an insurmountable obstacle any more than the temporary President Urrutia was an unresolvable obstacle in Cuba. But that is an awfully large series of *ifs*, all dependent on the actions of a revolutionary leadership—including the capacity to form a workers and farmers government against the bourgeois forces, get rid of the Urrutias, and lead the revolution forward against the interests the Urrutias symbolized.

If it is unprincipled to support a call for a coalition government, all the more do we disagree over calling for a coalition government prior to the smashing of Saigon's army. Under the present circumstances it is wrong to imply that the cease-fire accords have brought about a situation similar to that in China *after* 1949.

For many years the Red Army and the Chinese Communist Party attempted to find ways of entering into a coalition government with Chiang Kai-shek's forces and paid a tremendous price as a result. Will this happen in Vietnam? We hope not. Will the masses struggle against the Thieu regime? We know they will. Does the Thieu regime have any solid social support in Vietnam as such? No, it's a creature of American imperialism, a parasitic, corrupt outfit. But whether or not masses will be mobilized to smash this regime will depend upon the political leadership given by the NLF and the Communist Party. The call for national reconciliation and concord, and a coalition government, is an obstacle.

One cannot fault the Vietnamese, any more than the Bolsheviks could be faulted in 1918, for making concessions, even big concessions. They've been brutalized, year after year after year, by American imperialism, and the rats in the Kremlin and Peking have put the squeeze on them. Compromises, steps backward, and partial retreats are sometimes necessary. Let's even assume for the moment that all of them are necessary. If so, they must be presented as retreats, not victories, and what

has to be done to move forward must be outlined. That was one of the lessons of the Bolsheviks; any other course increases the possibility of a tragic defeat.

## The Character of the Vietnamese Leadership

We had a fourth difference. The Walter-Sterne document of the IEC majority says, "The revolutionary offensive of the South Vietnamese laboring masses will develop along already discernible lines," and it explains, in general correctly, what should be done. These measures include the agrarian revolution in the countryside and the struggle against the high cost of living, speculation, gambling, hoarding of vital goods, and exploitation of the masses by the industrial, financial, and big commercial bourgeoisie in the cities. In both the cities and the countryside there is the struggle to release the 200,000 political prisoners and for the dissolution of the puppet military and administrative apparatuses. But the document says that this *will* happen, and that "any interruption in the political struggle [is] less than likely."

It goes on to say, "All indications are that the cadres of the NLF and the Vietnamese Communist Party are systematically preparing the south Vietnamese population for this mass political struggle . . . the balance of the last fifteen years clearly demonstrates this party's tenacious commitment to the overthrow of the bourgeois state in South Vietnam . . . [this party] has broken with Stalinism's classical Menshevik line on the colonial and semi-colonial countries, and . . . is independent of the Moscow and Peking bureaucracies."

Not so, we say. The evidence shows that, even with the courage and proven revolutionary tenacity of the Vietnamese masses, the Vietnamese Communist Party has not maintained an unswerving commitment to the overthrow of the bourgeois state in South Vietnam. We say the contrary is true. Their commitment has been to the establishment of a bourgeois state in South Vietnam ruled by a coalition government, which they see as a necessary first stage of development in Vietnam.

It is *not* clear that this party has broken with Stalinism. It is *not* clear that it has gotten rid of the two-stage theory of revolution. It's *not* clear that it tells the truth to the masses and presents retreats to the masses of Vietnam as retreats rather than as victories. It is *not* clear that it rejects a coalition government as a road to independence and as a solution to the demands of the workers and peasants. And it is *not* clear whatsoever that they are systematically preparing for a mass struggle to overthrow the landlord-capitalist regime and to break the accord that is being imposed upon them. To the contrary!

The document also raised other fundamental questions, such as the character of Stalinism and the degree to which national liberation struggles can be brought to fruition by a Stalinist party.

In an article by Rennie Davis on the Op Ed page of the *New York Times* a few days ago, he claims "Nixon's peace with honor is a face-saving disguise for a 'Vietcong' victory." "It is a true peace," Madame Binh told him, "because it is peace with independence." This is *not* peace with independence. It is peace with the Thieu regime intact, and with American imperialism supporting it.

Madame Binh also stated that "we are strong and we

will force the Saigon administration to abide by the agreement. We are confident that the South Vietnamese people will be victorious in the end." This also is false. The Saigon regime will *not* be forced to abide by the agreement, but will take as much as it can get away with. And even if they did abide by the agreement, it would mean, over time, a setback for the Vietnamese revolution. Only if the NLF leadership breaks with the agreement and the pressures exerted by Moscow and Peking and mobilizes the masses to overthrow the Thieu regime can the revolution be victorious and independence won.

I would like to add that when the first disagreement on Vietnam emerged in the International several years ago, the political report by Ernest Germain to the 1969 IEC, which I have already referred to, included this paragraph:

"The ideal solution for American imperialism would be a real compromise in Vietnam, that is to say *a compromise solution that would precisely avoid the revolutionary effects of their defeat in South Vietnam*. . . . But . . . the area of compromise is practically nonexistent. . . . When you go through all these formulae and words, everything comes down to the very simple question: will or will not the NLF give up its arms when American imperialism withdraws from Vietnam? That's the key question. . . . The probability that they will give up their arms a second time is not very high in my opinion. And if they do not give up their arms, any wholesale withdrawal of American imperialism from South Vietnam would mean that they would hold power in South Vietnam. That's the essence of the question. It is possible that they will make opportunistic political compromises, that they will use all kinds of formulas from the Stalinist arsenal, but *they will hold power*. That is the essential thing. . . . That is the real dilemma of American imperialism; and they cannot get out of it. . . ." (Emphasis in original.)

We agreed that there was no solution around the corner and that the war was not over. However, we didn't rule out the possibility of just such a compromise solution. And we were right. That is precisely what Nixon has arranged with Moscow and Peking.

We did not think that the NLF would automatically have the power; it depended on *more* than how many of their guns were given up. It depended on political leadership.

Whether it wins supreme power or not remains to be seen. That depends on the character of the NLF leadership. And we do not have political confidence in that leadership, as the document adopted by the Maitan-Mandel-Frank leadership comrades indicate they do.

## The Question of Stalinism

Let us recall what the differences were over China at the last world congress because the current differences on Vietnam relate very directly to them.

Let me go over several fundamental differences in 1969. We support a draft resolution on China and the Cultural Revolution, which a majority of the United Secretariat, including Comrades Maitan, Mandel, and Frank, rejected. They rejected it, and made amendments and wanted to get rid of some parts. Let me read one of the paragraphs they insisted be thrown out.

"Nevertheless, Peking's basic policy, as reiterated many

times by its leaders and voiced once again upon the inauguration of the Nixon administration, has been 'peaceful coexistence' with U.S. imperialism. Out of narrow nationalistic considerations and in line with its doctrine that the revolution must first pass through a bourgeois stage before it can reach the socialist stage, Peking counsels and countenances support to bourgeois governments in Indonesia, Pakistan and other countries instead of mobilizing the masses for uncompromising struggle against the neo-colonial regimes."

I think that this paragraph reads pretty well today.

The second difference was over the characterization of the Chinese Communist Party leadership and the regime. We explained that the Chinese Communist Party leadership is fundamentally opportunistic, that it is national-minded, not internationalist-minded — that is, the narrow national interests of the bureaucracy come before the needs of the international revolution. This flows from the fact that Mao and Chou En-Lai represent a crystallized bureaucratic caste, not the Chinese masses. The Chinese Communist Party is a Stalinist party, Stalinized with the Stalinization of the Comintern.

Each one of these points was removed from the draft resolution by Comrades Maitan, Mandel, Frank, and their supporters. In their place was substituted the concept that the Chinese CP was "bureaucratic centrist," which means that the bureaucracy vacillates between reformism and revolutionary politics.

During the period when the world movement was divided, 1953-1963, the two factions developed their positions on China separately. Discussion on this question really did not take place after the reunification. Now, with the differences on Vietnam, and with the evolution of time and a test of the policy and character of the Peking bureaucracy, we're in better shape to continue the discussion. I know Comrade Peng also is quite anxious to write a further contribution on the lessons of who was right and who was wrong in 1969 on the Mao bureaucracy.

This is not just a historical question. For example, in October 1972, Comrade Henri Weber, a member of the Ligue Communiste Political Bureau, editor of *Rouge*, wrote a long article on the Chinese Communist Party. He said that Mao's regime oscillates between Stalinism and revolutionary Marxism. The leadership is pragmatic, he admitted, but revolutionary pragmatic. He described it as a "revolutionary bureaucracy." If Comrade Weber thinks the Maoist bureaucracy is a revolutionary bureaucracy and Mao is a revolutionary bureaucrat, we have a fundamental difference. We consider it a *counterrevolutionary* bureaucracy, and Mao to be a *counterrevolutionary* bureaucrat. Further unfolding of the discussion on China, which is on the agenda for the world congress, will be very important. We hope Comrade Weber and the rest of the leaders of the Maitan-Mandel-Frank grouping contribute their ideas.

## Party Building in Europe

Now let me briefly discuss the European resolution submitted by the United Secretariat majority ("The Building of Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe," IIDB, Vol. IX, 1972, No. 5). Comrade Germain presented the report for the majority.

First, there is one part of the document that is completely unacceptable to us no matter what the rest of it says: the defense of entryism *sui generis*, that is, the long-term entry inside the Communist and Social-Democratic parties of Europe as practiced after the 1953 split in the International. The document draws a balance sheet on entryism *sui generis* as it was practiced by the comrades in Europe and deepened after the 1953 split.

The document says a small error was made when the comrades "overspecialized" in entryism. Our opinion is slightly different. We would say they "underspecialized" in party building. They did not allow for historical variations about the way the class struggle would develop. One of the reasons for their adopting the position on entryism *sui generis* was that they believed a war between the Soviet Union and American imperialism was imminent. This was not a far-fetched idea, given the situation in the early 1950s. We shared that view for a while. However, they believed that this would result in a deep radicalization of the Stalinist parties, if for no other reason than to defend the USSR against the onslaught, and that revolutionary developments would grow out of the war, and that the Communist parties would be at the head of these developments. To take advantage of the opportunities, they felt it was necessary to get deep inside these parties.

We were dubious about this tactic. When it became a strategic orientation for the whole movement we considered it to be erroneous. The error was compounded when deep entryism was persisted in after the dropping of the war-revolution thesis. When the International was reunified in 1963, the agreement was to put aside discussion of this question for the time being because it was a historical question. It is foolish to get into an unnecessary argument over who was right and who was wrong in the past, as long as there is agreement on what to do next.

A problem arises when it becomes a question of *voting* for a historical evaluation, because this implies a repetition of the tactics or the strategy if the same conditions come into being again. For that reason, we cannot now pass over in silence the question of entryism *sui generis*. I don't think there's any choice except to delve into the history of the International, the history of the differences, and the history of the origin and results of the entryism *sui generis* tactic. That's another obligation we'll now have to take on.

We tried to convince the comrades to delete that part of the document. It would not have changed our vote on its general line, but they don't need it to explain what they think should be done in capitalist Europe today. Resolutions are poor places for retrospective votes of confidence. They could otherwise have somebody write a history of this experience that wouldn't be part of a line resolution requiring a vote.

We've never voted on Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution*. That's not an official document of the Socialist Workers Party. No, that's Trotsky's opinion. You don't have to agree with everything in it to join our party. It would be an outrage to ask you to vote on Jim Cannon's *History of American Trotskyism*. That's Jim's opinion, not official history. I think most of us would agree that it is one of the most valuable books ever written by an American revolutionist. But it's not an official line. You don't have to vote for it. We don't write official

histories. There was no such thing as official histories in the time of Lenin and Trotsky. Zinoviev wrote down his thoughts on history, Lenin wrote his, and Trotsky his. Many leaders of the movement wrote down their ideas. Comrades who were in a minority wrote essays and books on history, and they were published. Official histories came in with Stalin.

We vote on line, on what we're going to do and why: how we're going to carry the struggle forward against the war in Indochina; what we're going to do about the abortion campaign; what we're going to do about *Militant* sales work; what we're going to do in this factory or on that campus. That's what we vote on. We vote on the line for organized action.

More important than this point on entryism *sui generis*, we have many disagreements with the basic perspectives presented in the document on Europe. Although we are not normally suspicious people, we do get suspicious when we are handed a document that purports to cover revolutionary perspectives all the way from Finland to Spain. I don't think you can do it. It leads to exactly the same kind of blunder that was made in the Latin American document in 1969, where a continental strategy covering everything from Mexico down to Uruguay, from Argentina to Venezuela to Brazil, was included in one big package. It leads to a search for pat answers and schemas as a substitute for the tactical judgments that comrades in those countries have the knowledge and sensitivity to make.

We're also dubious about the four or five year perspective of revolution, even though we recognize that it is possible. Anyone who thought this was an impossibility found out in May-June 1968 in France that it's not.

But this prognosis of "four or five years before the decisive battles are fought" in Europe is dubious to hinge a strategy on. Furthermore, it makes the same mistake of projecting a schema, of a way that has to happen, and then adapting strategy and tactics to fit. A gruesome example is the way the Leninist strategy of party building drifts toward "transforming the vanguard" into an "adequate instrument" of proletarian revolution.

A third disagreement is over the concept of the "vanguard" and "vanguard actions." We don't agree with the formulation in the European document that we should develop our strategy primarily around what the interests and concerns of the vanguard are as long as it doesn't contradict the needs of the working class. We think that puts everything on its head. We begin with the big political, social, and economic problems facing the working class. These include, for example, inflation, unemployment, war, oppression of women, and racism. We decide our campaigns on the basis of what should be done about these questions not on the basis of what other radicals, the so-called vanguard, think.

Take, for example, how we run our election campaigns. In our recent campaigns, we knew that the objective situation meant that the majority of our recruits would probably be students and we tried to maximize that recruitment. We want to recruit the men and women who come to agree with our ideas; we want them to join and help build a revolutionary Marxist party. And we recruit them wherever we can.

At the same time, we approach and develop our campaigns in a certain way. We don't say, "Now, what have students got on their minds? What are they worrying about?" That's not how we proceed. We say, "What are the problems before the world working class and before the American people? Let's give answers to these problems." To the war in Vietnam, inflation, unemployment, racism, etc. Then let's try to present our ideas on these issues and campaign on them so we can win radicalizing students, workers, and others. We try to win the "vanguard" to *this* campaign, to *this* platform. We show them what we're fighting for and what class is going to be the decisive force. We inspire them to throw in their lot with this struggle. We think the European document repeats the mistake made in their vanguard-Vietnam campaigns.

Other things bother us, too. Women's liberation gets *one word* in a document of 19 pages. Women are included along with artists, scholars, and people who are concerned about ecology.

The youth radicalization and the task of building revolutionary youth organizations also get very short shrift. Democratic demands get downplayed. The national question is hardly considered. Work in the army is mentioned in one line. The latter is not a small question; it can lead to bad errors. This was one of the fundamental errors of the POR in Bolivia. In Bolivia the need for revolutionists to take a correct policy toward propaganda work in the army was central to the question of workers taking power.

Another dangerous side to the resolution is what it does *not* say about adventurism. The recent documents of Comrade Jebrac, and several actions of the Ligue Communiste raise a danger of adventurist actions that could damage the entire world movement. Instead of *explicitly* rejecting this logic—no longer an abstract question—the resolution incorporates ambiguous formulas on armed minority violence that open the door to dangerous blunders.

A final criticism is that much of the document is so abstract that, instead of clarifying the issues, it obscures them. It is a document which comrades with two different perspectives who voted against each other at the last Ligue Communiste convention could both vote for. When that happens, you know that something is amiss.

In our opinion, the discussion on Europe is on a different level from that of the differences over Vietnam and Latin America. This is a discussion that has just begun. Comrades at the IEC meeting criticized us for not having a counterresolution. We said, we're in no rush to draft a counterresolution. I think we waited four years for a counterresolution on Latin America. What we want is a discussion where we can raise our doubts, questions, and criticisms. And most importantly we want to hear from the European comrades as this develops. We presented to the IEC our fraternal criticisms of the European resolution. They will be in print soon (IIDB, Vol. X, No. 3, pp. 5-31).

At the IEC, Livio Maitan said that he wanted to be the first one to say openly that we are part of a right-wing opposition in the world Trotskyist movement. So I dutifully report to you that Livio is the first person to say to our face in front of a meeting that we are supporting a right-wing opposition in the Fourth International.

There were dire warnings about how it isn't good to build a big party if it's reformist. We assumed we were

all there because we were building revolutionary parties. But the fact that this warning was raised led one to believe that some comrades might be beginning to have some doubts about the character of the Socialist Workers Party. If this is believed, I hope it will be stated in writing so it can be answered.

## For a Democratic World Congress

Finally, we favored a postponement of the world congress. We're very concerned about the fact that the world congress is presently scheduled for the end of August of this year. From what I've outlined it's clear that the decisions to be made at this world congress have great importance. In my judgment, programmatic questions are involved, and along with that, the future of the Fourth International. This necessitates time for an adequate, democratic discussion. But there's a big problem in organizing an adequate discussion in the world movement.

Comrades in the SWP are used to a rich and democratic internal discussion. At our conventions we regularly have international points on the agenda. We not only discuss the general world situation and the state of the world Trotskyist movement; we take up important international questions in the preconvention discussion, such as China and Cuba and Vietnam and the Arab East. We discuss these major international questions and then decide on a general line.

In Europe there is a different approach to international questions. To my knowledge there has not been a convention in Europe since 1968 where an international question has been on the agenda following a preconvention discussion on documents. Conventions in Europe are usually devoted exclusively to national questions. They hold special conventions for world congresses where international questions are discussed.

We're used to getting *Intercontinental Press* every week. We're used to having very speedy translations into English of everything that's submitted by foreign comrades to the discussion bulletin. This material is circulated to our entire membership and at all times. We're used to having special SWP information bulletins in which we include additional documents that have not been submitted to the International Internal Discussion Bulletin, and we translate items from other languages for the comrades so that they can study them and make up their own minds.

But in other countries there's a tremendous lag in preparation and translation of the documents. This is especially a problem with regard to French, because it is the language of several thousand comrades, a big component of the world movement, and the French section has the resources and personnel to fulfill its obligations.

Let me give you just a partial rundown to indicate the scope of the problem at this time. The document on the worldwide radicalization of youth, which is on the agenda for the world congress, has been translated into French, but it has not been available in print for a long time. Our major contribution to the discussion on the youth question, the article that Caroline Lund submitted for us after the YSA convention adopted it in December 1969, over three years ago, has still not been translated and circulated to the comrades in Europe.

Consider the basic documents on China, like the one

I quoted from earlier, or the contributions by Joe Hansen presenting our position, or Comrade Peng's contributions, or a major article by a Japanese comrade. Most of them are now almost four years old, and none are available in French. The contribution that Comrade Ross Dowson made going over the whole history of the Canadian experience on the question of entryism, which has become quite relevant now, was submitted two years ago, and it has not been translated yet.

Comrade Lorenzo's article on Bolivia has not yet been translated. The *Unico Camino* article of the PRT(C) and the Fifth Congress documents of the PRT-ERP have not yet been translated. The importance of these, comrades, is immense. It was on the basis of the assurance made at the last world congress by Comrade Livio that the *Unico Camino* document did not represent the politics of the PRT(C) and was simply something written by three individual members, that many of the comrades voted to accept the PRT (C) as a section rather than the PRT (La Verdad). Comrade Livio reported that the PRT(C) was slightly larger than the PRT (La Verdad); and in the absence of further information, that was the only basis to go on to determine which group was to be recognized as the section. If the truth about *Unico Camino* had been known, if at the last world congress it had been known that this was indeed the position of the PRT(C) group that Livio was proposing to recognize as the official section of the Fourth International, I cannot believe that any Trotskyist there could have voted to do so. How could the comrades have disenfranchised the PRT (La Verdad) as the section, maintaining it only as a sympathizing group, and recognized this non-Trotskyist group as the official section?

At our last convention, the greetings brought by a French comrade raised rather serious charges, questioning Peter Camejo's veracity, because Peter had told the convention that the *Unico Camino* document was the position of the PRT-ERP of Argentina. It is now settled that the *Unico Camino* document was adopted by the PRT(C)'s fourth congress, and it remains their position and they have requested it to be circulated in the world movement. This was published and made available to the comrades in English some time ago. It has still not been translated into French.

But if they don't translate *Unico Camino* and the PRT's fifth congress documents into French, how can we expect the French comrades to fairly decide whether or not the policy in Argentina was right or wrong?

So this problem of translation and circulation of documents is obviously a very big problem in preparing a democratic world congress. And the problem is not only with French, but also with Spanish, which is also the language of a large component of the world movement. In other languages, there is a problem too; in these cases the sections and sympathizing groups are generally too small to be expected to translate all the documents, but they will attempt to translate as many of the most important ones as possible. But it will take time.

In addition to the translation backlog, there are also many documents yet to be written and translated, including resolutions scheduled for presentation for a vote at the world congress. And tendencies are just now forming, bringing the international discussion to a new stage.

With all this in mind we favored postponement of the world congress as the only practical way to try to come to grips with this problem of organizing a democratic discussion. This proposal was rejected, and the congress is scheduled to be held in August or September. We consider this to be very disturbing.

Comrade Walter, arguing against a postponement, expressed concern that the discussion "does not drag on too long." How he can think that this is the problem we face is beyond me. In most of the world movement, the discussion isn't dragging on; it hasn't yet begun! The comrades don't even have the documents to read in their own languages.

It is true that within the United Secretariat and the IEC, where the comrades tend to know many languages, the discussion has been going on for a long time. But our concept of democratic centralism is that the membership decides, not just a few leaders. We absolutely reject any sort of idea that the big political questions have to be decided by a select few leaders and linguists who supposedly are the only ones capable of understanding the issues.

Comrade Walter went on to explain his concern about the "mass" of discussion material and his worry that extending the discussion "would lead to a situation in which the majority of the ranks of the movement would be in no position to read, let alone discuss, such a mass of documents." (IIDB, Vol. X, No. 6, has the full texts of both the statements in favor of and against postponement.)

That type of statement really burns me up. I am confident that the comrades of this world movement are perfectly capable of understanding the issues involved, of making a thorough study of the issues, and of deciding on that basis. And I suspect that far from being put off by the prospect of studying a "mass" of material, the Trotskyists throughout the world are eager to get the facts, study the debate, and make up their own minds. And the whole world movement will benefit by that educational process. It will be a test of the leadership capacity of the world movement to prepare and organize a thorough democratic discussion.

## The Question of Democratic Centralism

The prospect of not having a full and democratic discussion is a grave danger facing the Fourth International. In spite of the depth of the differences, the comrades in the majority of the IEC insisted on driving ahead toward a speedy world congress with the possibility that many of the important documents will not be available for the membership to read and decide upon. And they try to justify this course in the name of democratic centralism, saying that the key problem facing the International is the need to increase centralism. This is a very disturbing sign.

Our concept of democratic centralism is different. And, I believe that our point of view is the same as Trotsky's. Trotsky had to deal many times with this very question of the interrelationship between democracy and centralism. In 1932 he drafted an important document for the International Left Opposition, and a lot of what he said then fits the present situation perfectly:



"The sections of the Left Opposition, originating out of small propaganda groups, gradually are being transformed into workers' organizations. This transition puts the tasks of party democracy in first place. Regular organizational relations must finally replace the kind of regime in which a few comrades, who are closely connected with and understand each other even by the most informal indications, make all their decisions in a casual manner.

"The foundation of party democracy is timely and complete *information*, available to all members of the organization and covering all the important questions of their life and struggle. *Discipline* can be built up only on a conscious assimilation of the policies of the organization by all its members and on confidence in its leadership. Such confidence can only be won gradually, in the course of common struggle and reciprocal influence. The iron discipline which is needed cannot be achieved by naked command. The revolutionary organization cannot do without the punishment of undisciplined and disruptive elements; but such disciplinary measures can be applied only as a last resort and, moreover, on the condition of solid support from the public opinion of the majority of the organization.

"The frequent practical objections, based on the 'loss of time' in abiding by democratic methods, amount to shortsighted opportunism. The education and consolidation of the organization is a most important task. Neither time nor effort should be spared for its fulfillment. Moreover, party democracy, as the only conceivable guarantee against unprincipled conflicts and unmotivated splits, in the last analysis does not increase the overhead costs of development but reduces them. Only through constant and conscientious adherence to the methods of democracy can the leadership undertake important steps on its own responsibility in truly emergency cases without provoking disorganization or dissatisfaction.

"The preconference directs the Secretariat to observe the carrying-out of the principles of party democracy in content as well as in form, within each section as well as in the reciprocal relations between the Secretariat and the sections, particularly and above all in the preparation for the international conference." (*Writings of Leon Trotsky*, 1932-33, pp. 57-58.)

One of the things to note about how Trotsky approached the question of democratic centralism is that he approached it concretely. It is one thing to deal with the problems of applying democratic centralism in a politically homogeneous international disposing of large resources, encompassing established, sizable parties in many countries with authoritative leaderships tested time and again in the class struggle.

It is quite clear another thing to deal with the problem of applying democratic centralism in an international that is still striving for fundamental programmatic clarification, that is composed mostly of newly built nuclei of

parties, with the three largest sections or sympathizing groups, the SWP, PST, and Ligue Communiste, numbering a couple thousand or less, and where the problem of achieving genuine international collaboration between leaderships of different sections still remains to be solved. We don't *wait* for all these problems to be solved; but we must concretely take them into account in our thinking.

To act as if the problem before us is one of increasing centralism would be like trying to put a jet engine on a coaster wagon—it won't propel it forward, it will only tear it apart. The key problem before us is determining the political line, and that must be determined by the members, and not "centralized" in the hands of a few leaders.

This demand for greater centralism raises another concern to us. Does it imply that perhaps we, with our differing views, are some sort of obstacle to advancing the work of the world movement, and that some sort of organizational centralism is necessary to solve this problem? We don't think so. All we have done is point out the truth as we see it, and ask that our views be either rebutted or accepted.

We think that, to the degree there are obstacles to advancing the work of the international movement, the fault does not lie with us and those increasing numbers of comrades around the world who think as we do. The real problems of the International can only be exacerbated by rushing into a speedy world congress, because a world congress held without full democratic discussion cannot have authority.

It is no exaggeration, we believe, to say that the future of the International is at stake in this discussion. And we are confident that, if our views are given a fair hearing in the world movement, a majority of comrades will come to agree with us on the basic principled questions.

The Vietnamese revolution has taught us all a great lesson. It has demonstrated the courage and capacity of the oppressed masses to struggle and shape history—the same lesson that an earlier generation was taught by the Cubans. It is proof once again that our class, the working class, has the capacity to do the job. Vietnam also drives home the imperative necessity of building a revolutionary leadership. As far as we are concerned, the fight to build a principled Trotskyist International is the fight for the future of humanity.

There's absolutely no turning back, as far as we're concerned. We see the building of the Socialist Workers Party and the building of the world movement as a unified process. We make no promises and offer no promissory notes about when this will be accomplished or under what conditions. We will learn much more from our comrades all over the world, as we have learned much already. We will also contribute our ideas and fight for them. And no power on earth can throw us out of the world movement and no one can provoke us into leaving.

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Below is a list of International Internal Discussion Bulletins, the English-language edition of the internal discussion bulletin of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International.

It has been published by the Socialist Workers Party as a fraternal courtesy to the United Secretariat of the Fourth International since the reunification of the Fourth International in 1963.

If the price of a bulletin is omitted and replaced by an asterisk (\*), the bulletin is out of print.

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\*\*Discussion on Latin America, 1968-1972 (\$1.50)

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\*\*\*\*Discussion on the International Youth Radicalization, 1968-1971 (50 cents)

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\*\*\*\*\*The Algerian Revolution from 1962 to 1969, Political Report at the December 1969 IEC, Again and Always, the Question of the International, Letter to 1971 SWP Convention from Pierre Frank (30 cents)

\*\*\*\*\*On the Character of Zionism and the Palestinian Liberation Movement, Nigeria, Nigerian Situation and Our Tasks (20 cents)

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For: Delfin, Kurt, Livio, Luc, Petersen, Pierre, Vergeat, Walter  
Against: Adair, Hans, Pedro, Therese, Stateman  
Not Present: Ghulam, Juan, Pia, Roca

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