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On the Orientation of the Fourth International in Europe

By Dieter, Torben Hansen, Marcel, Tony Roberts,
Anders Svedin, and Mary-Alice Waters

1. At the 1969 World Congress, a minority of the delegates argued that the ultraleft turn on Latin America, if persisted in, could not help but have consequences for the general line of the Fourth International elsewhere. The IEC majority document on "Building Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe" contains a series of errors that stem from the same methodological mistakes committed in the "Resolution on Latin America" adopted at the last world congress.

These errors consist in taking the general tendency in the development of the class struggle on an entire continent and transforming it into an immediate perspective for every country instead of taking it as a framework for analyzing the different rates of development of the class struggle in each country and their concrete interactions.

This "analysis" is then used to rationalize and justify imposing a tactic like guerrilla warfare, or "minority violence" and "exemplary actions," on every section, thus replacing the Leninist strategy of building a revolutionary party and contradicting the method of the transitional program.

Underlying these errors is an adaptation to the political moods of the radicalizing forces ("the new vanguard with a mass character"). The hope that this can be transformed into an "adequate instrument" through which we can lead the proletarian revolution gradually dilutes the Leninist perspective of constructing mass Bolshevik parties.

2. We believe it is correct to write a document on capitalist Europe analyzing the broad outlines of economic, social and political developments. It is also possible to draw some general conclusions from this analysis that will help orient our sections. Such a document, along with others, outlining the principal guidelines for our work in such areas as the trade unions, the mass workers parties, student movement, anti-imperialist campaigns, women's liberation work, etc., would provide a solid basis for each section to analyze the situation in its country, develop perspectives, and decide on its own tactics and orientation.

3. Even on this level of economic, social and political analysis, however, the method of the IEC majority resolution contains some obvious errors. It fails to deal with such questions as the European Common Market; it almost completely ignores the significance of the Irish freedom struggle and the impact this struggle has, and will have,

not only on the class struggle in Britain, but throughout Europe; it virtually ignores the fact that capitalist Europe exists in a world context, where the European bourgeoisie plays a major imperialist role. It abstracts the class struggle in Europe from its dialectical interrelationship with the political revolution and colonial revolution.

4. But the European document does much more than draw some basic conclusions from a general analysis of capitalist Europe: it actually deduces a categorical prognosis for all the European countries, as well as a "tactic" for building the party, to be applied by all the European sections. In his reply to Comrade Waters, Comrade Pierre Frank stated that only one short-term variant could be anticipated: the generalization of revolutionary crises in all capitalist Europe.

5. This schematic and oversimplified approach makes it difficult for the leaderships of the European sections to correctly analyze the political situation in each country. A combination of a lack of concrete analysis on the one hand and a transplantation of the method and projections of the European document on the other can only lead to (and in fact already has led to) serious errors in several European sections.

6. There is no question that capitalist Europe has witnessed a general upsurge in workers struggles since 1968, a rise that will lead to class confrontations of an even sharper character, as interimperialist rivalry is growing and the economic situation is deteriorating. Revolutionary explosions could occur in several countries, producing wide-ranging repercussions.

However, the IEC majority resolution devotes far too little analysis to the different rates of development of the class struggle in the various countries.

In this regard it errs in the direction of an exaggerated "optimism" by moving very quickly — and in a very superficial way — to equate economic crisis, political crisis of the bourgeoisie, crisis of reformism, and pre-revolutionary or revolutionary crisis.

Applying the IEC majority line to Britain, the National Committee majority perspectives document for the December 1973 conference of the IMG ("The Crisis of British Capitalism and its Current International Context") starts from the economic crisis of the British bourgeoisie, which is equated with a "decisive" confrontation, which is in turn

equated with a crisis (if not the demise) of the Tory party, which is again equated with a rise of fascism.

The methodological error of the European document is the same as the one found in the Latin American resolution adopted at the 1969 world congress. The general tendency for a continent is confused with the immediate situation in all the countries without taking into account the profound differences that exist, the reality of ebbs as well as upsurges in the class struggle, or, for example, the influences that partial defeats in one or another country have on the class struggle elsewhere.

7. We therefore reject the generalization of revolutionary crises throughout all Europe as a short-term certainty or as *the single variant* determining the activity of every section. The political line for each country must be elaborated by analyzing—within the more general context we indicated—the evolution of the political situation in each country.

8. Moreover, the activity of our sections is determined not only by our general political analysis, but also by the size and political maturity of our own cadres and the relationship of forces with other currents within the workers movement. The European document tends to ignore these factors, and uses the so-called "analysis of the period" as a rationalization for abdicating responsibility for involvement in and leadership of other reflections of the radicalization which are in no way "peripheral" to the development of the class struggle in Europe, and in which our numerically small cadres can play a significant political and even mass leadership role: the student movement, anti-imperialist campaigns, the women's liberation movement, etc.

By downplaying these questions, the European document tends to underestimate the uneven and combined development of the radicalization, which can offer small revolutionary groups opportunities to gain valuable experience and recruit substantially. This underestimation is most blatantly revealed by the absence of a balance sheet of the youth radicalization despite the mass struggles in Britain, France and Belgium.

The social roots of the various facets of the radicalization are ignored and the workers movement is exempted from responsibility for responding to the tasks posed by all aspects of the oppression of the masses by capitalism.

9. The European document accords a great importance to what is called "the new vanguard of a mass character," and it defines "winning hegemony within this vanguard" as the present "tactic" for building the party.

We reject the schematic concept of three "tactics" for building the revolutionary party.

For a revolutionary organization that is still small, winning hegemony in the workers vanguard is not a tactic but rather a goal. And the IEC Majority tendency gets itself boxed into a contradiction when it anticipates a generalization of revolutionary crises but refuses to consider the possibility of the "tactic" of "organic growth" of our sections. Such a contradiction can only lead to a search for other forces and other means to resolve the crisis of leadership.

We also reject the document's positive assessment of the third "tactic," entryism *sui generis*, an orientation that re-

sulted in catastrophe for several European sections. This "tactic" stemmed from the same methodological errors that have today produced the "strategy of armed struggle" and the adaptation to the "new mass vanguard." A general analysis was turned into a categorical prediction; a single "tactic for the period" was imposed on all sections; when it was recognized that the political analysis that had originally served to justify the initiation of the tactic was no longer valid, other justifications for continuing the "tactic" were found; and over time the tactic became transformed into a *strategy for party building*, rather than a *tactic within the Leninist strategy for party building*.

The analysis of the period provides the basis for elaboration of our general line. But our concept of building the party is not one of applying a series of "tactics" which change according to the "period," as outlined in the IEC majority European document. Such a rigid concept can disorient our sections and stand in the way of taking advantage of sudden turns and unforeseen developments—such as doing fraction work inside Social Democratic organizations if a shift to the left and a substantial influx of new members occurs.

To such schematic recipes for "tactics" we counterpose a unified strategy based on the dynamics of the mobilization of the working masses through advancing their class independence and strength—the method of the transitional program.

10. It is extremely important for building revolutionary parties in Europe today to understand that a broad layer of radicalized youth and growing layers of workers are escaping the direct control of the Stalinist and Social Democratic leaders of the working class. They constitute an "operative factor," a layer that is relatively open to revolutionary socialist ideas, a layer that can be a base for mobilizing even wider sectors of the population in actions. This broad radicalization permits us to demonstrate in practice the value of our program and our principled class-struggle methods of action.

11. But the IEC majority immediately and very superficially calls this a "vanguard." The notion of a "vanguard of a mass character" attempts to include elements as different from one another sociologically as radicalized student youth and radicalized workers, and elements as different from one another politically as Trotskyists, Maoists, anarchists, and various centrists.

The elaboration of our political line becomes completely impossible if it doesn't take these differentiations into account from the beginning. For example, it is possible to hold demonstrations with Maoists on concrete issues, around concrete demands. But it is much more difficult to work with them in the trade unions, or even to jointly intervene in a reformist-led demonstration. It is easier to build a class-struggle trade-union tendency with politically unorganized workers than with Maoists or unorganized radical students.

12. We must take into account both the power of the newly radicalized layers that can be mobilized in specific actions such as demonstrations and campus occupations, and all their weaknesses insofar as work toward our strategic objective of winning the leadership of the majority of the working class is concerned. This objective

requires a correct orientation toward the mass workers organizations.

Two symmetrical errors must be avoided. One is *overestimating* the hold which the reformist leaders of the working-class exercise over the masses of organized workers and failing to recognize and take advantage of the deep contradictions which exist between the ranks of the workers organizations and their bureaucratic misleaders (cf. the attitude of En Marcha toward work inside the Comisiones Obreras and their assertion that the "spontaneous consciousness" of the Spanish proletariat "is not in contradiction with either syndicalism or Stalinist reformism, but is in contradiction to communism." [see "The Crisis of the LCR and the En Marcha Split," *IIDB*, Vol. X, No. 24]) It is these contradictions we must exploit in our battle to win the day-to-day leadership of the struggles of our class.

The other error is *underestimating* the hold and pressure which these same reformist leaderships exercise over the "new vanguard of a mass character," pressures which can lead that "vanguard" (and our forces along with them) to adapt to the Stalinists and Social Democrats (cf. the position of the Ligue Communiste toward the Union of the Left at the time of the March 1973 elections).

Both errors produce the same result: abdication of our responsibility to combat the reformist leaderships of the working class on a day-to-day, struggle-by-struggle basis, turning over the leadership of the immediate battles of the class to the reformists, and substituting the mobilization of the "vanguard" in action for the need to advance the independent mobilization of the class.

13. The programmatic basis on which we are struggling to win hegemony in the "vanguard" remains extremely vague in the IEC majority resolution. Apart from workers control, which risks being transformed into a fetish, the European document contains very few immediate, democratic or transitional demands. For example, the key demand of a workers (and farmers) government is treated very superficially, although concretized according to the specific conditions in each country it is centrally important for several sections in the period ahead.

There is a vast gulf between the present situation and a revolutionary crisis and a situation of dual power. The comrades who ask, "How should we carry out work in the trade unions?" or "What principles should the platform of a trade-union tendency be based on?" or "Do we need a combat program for the sections today? If so, what questions should be included in it?" will find very little in the way of answers in the European document.

14. In the European document our central task is defined as winning hegemony in the "new vanguard," rather than winning the leadership of the class. (Leadership of the class will be achieved at a later stage through the dramatic actions that this "vanguard" under our hegemony will engage in.) This reduces our strategic task of building a mass Leninist party capable of leading the workers movement to little more than an ideological reference. This leads the IEC majority to consider what it calls the "vanguard of a mass character" in isolation from the masses that a genuine vanguard must be capable of winning over. In this sense, the IEC majority sees our relationship to the radicalized youth and workers as a tactic, a lever or

instrument to use to get around the reformist leaderships. The risk of becoming blind to the "vanguard's" limitations and of gradually adapting to these limitations is great—as has already been seen in relationship to economism, Guevarism, the Vietnam accords, the Union of the Left, etc.

15. This adaptation has shown itself very clearly in several incorrect concepts of the IEC majority.

a. The fact that it advocates national campaigns "corresponding to the concerns of the vanguard." This has already led to obvious errors in Irish work, in Vietnam work, in Chile solidarity work (cf. "The Test of Ireland," by Gerry Foley, *IIDB*, Vol. X, No. 17; "How the 'Ninth World Congress Turn' Misdirected the Work of the IMG," by Alan Harris, *IIDB*, Vol. X, No. 23; "A Criticism of the United Secretariat Majority draft Resolution on 'The Building of Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe,' by Mary-Alice Waters, *IIDB*, Vol. X, No. 3) and has frequently hampered the building of movements based on the objective needs of the masses and the objective needs of the class struggle. This erroneous course can only become deepened now that Comrade Frank has explained that the subjective "'concerns' of the vanguard are the needs of the masses" in Europe today.

b. In more general terms, this leads to a propagandistic, maximalist approach to the class struggle that can only appear abstract except in rather restricted politicized circles. An example of this is the 1973 election campaign of the ex-Ligue Communiste, which was focused almost exclusively around explaining "there is no peaceful road to socialism," rather than centering on a rounded program to answer the objective needs of the class struggle, including immediate and democratic as well as transitional demands that could facilitate moving toward a workers government. This approach, which by definition can only influence a "vanguard," while failing to educate it concerning the task of winning the leadership of the class through the method of the transitional program, is called the "line of building the organization" (probably in the first stage).

c. The simplistic and therefore misleading theory of "unity in action—outflanking" which in most cases (when we see the political components which take part in this) means unity in action with other organizations which are labeled "leftist."

It is clear that in many cases it is important to seek unity in action, even if limited to "leftists," in order to be able to outflank the reformist leaders of the mass organizations on specific demands.

But the goal of such demonstrations and actions organized together with other far-left groups must be to strengthen and advance the unification and independent mobilization of the working class on the basis of our program, which is the only program that expresses the interests of the class, and to advance the construction of the revolutionary party, which is the only way that program can be defended.

If "unity in action—outflanking" becomes transformed into a *strategy* for party building, a "privileged orientation" justified by "an analysis of the period," it can be put into practice only at the cost of adapting to opponent currents with whom we differ on precisely the central objective—advancing the line of class-against-class, educating the working class to recognize and oppose all forms of class-

collaboration, unifying and mobilizing the entire class in action on the basis of *our class-struggle program*.

We must also reject any oversimplified schema of being able to outflank the reformist leaders of the mass organizations of the working class. We cannot simply go around them. We must *replace* them as the leadership of the day-to-day battles of the class.

To achieve this, a correct concept of the united front is indispensable.

The platform on which united action is to be organized must take the following considerations into account:

—it must be based on the objective needs of the class struggle;

—it must try to make its goals and demands understandable to the masses—who still have illusions in their reformist leaderships—even if the masses do not agree or participate in the beginning.

Above all we must avoid the approach: "There aren't very many people here; apart from us there's only the Maoists and other far-left currents. Let's bring out our full, maximum program and march under the slogan 'The only solution: Revolution!'"

This was precisely the error that marked our Chile solidarity campaign in several countries. As Comrade Tariq Ali stressed in his description of the November 4, 1973, Chile solidarity demonstration in London, "Our main intervention was based on the following chants or slogans: 'Armed Road, Only Road,' 'One Solution, Revolution'" (*Intercontinental Press*, December 17, 1973).

Such a maximalist approach in effect abdicates the struggle for leadership of the day-to-day battles of the working masses and leaves them in the hands of the reformists. It reflects an inability to work out a *program* to combat the reformist leaders, a search for a fast route to "outflank" them.

We must convince the most politically conscious layers that the goal is not to mobilize a vanguard separate from the class, but to mobilize the working class under the leadership of the mass revolutionary Marxist party around a system of demands that provides a bridge from the present to the program of the socialist revolution. This implies unremitting political battle against those who would substitute their own consciousness and concerns for those of the masses, against those who believe that mobilizing the vanguard is sufficient.

d. "Exemplary actions" and "minority violence."

The term "exemplary action" is used by the IEC majority to obscure and confuse two politically incompatible orientations. It includes politically correct initiatives which point the way forward for the masses of the working class—such as the "exemplary" action taken by the Lip workers or the building of the antiwar movement in the United States. But on the other hand it is also used by the IEC majority to refer to actions which are in no way based on a conception of leading the mobilization of the class and its allies in struggle. This includes actions such as throwing Molotov cocktails at the Argentine embassy in Paris at the time of the Trelew massacre, or the kidnapping and execution of Sallustro. Through Comrade Pierre Frank's document, the comrades of the IEC majority have now explained that in their view such actions are of vital importance in raising the level of consciousness of the masses.

16. The IEC majority's errors taken as a whole—including their interrelated errors on the "new vanguard of a mass character" and downplaying the strategic task of winning leadership of the working class—have led the IEC majority to revise (at least in practice) the two fundamental points of Trotskyism: the method of the transitional program and the Leninist strategy for building the revolutionary party.

17. The method of the transitional program—which consists in raising the level of consciousness of the masses through their own experiences—tends to be replaced by the method of exemplary actions, actions taken by revolutionists outside the mass movement. The masses, reduced to the role of spectators, are supposedly "educated" by these examples and "stimulated" into action.

We reject this "spectacular action" theory of winning the leadership of the class. It tends to substitute the techniques of minority "initiatives"—especially the need for "minority violence"—for a program enabling us to confront and replace the reformist leadership of the class. It tends to substitute technical, organizational "tactics" for political program.

Insofar as Latin America is concerned, this tendency is very clear in the "strategy of armed struggle" and armed propaganda. The line of the last world congress tends to reduce the Marxist program to the need for armed struggle to which everything else in the program is subordinated.

As the example of Chile has once more tragically demonstrated, even where sectors of the working class are armed, the revolutionary will and combativity of the masses will time and again be betrayed until a mass revolutionary Marxist party is capable of politically destroying the reformist leadership and replacing it.

As a minority of the delegates at the last world congress feared, the errors underlying the Latin American orientation were not limited to Latin America. The theories on "minority violence" in Europe prove this. But the consequences of abandoning the method of the transitional program are not simply limited to this. The IEC majority's concept of national campaigns corresponding to the concerns of the vanguard results in an inability to build and lead movements based on the objective needs of the masses.

18. The IEC majority now openly asserts a theory of building the revolutionary party in two stages: first winning leadership over the "vanguard" by orienting to its concerns; then the masses. Implied in this is also a theory of two programs—a maximum program for the "vanguard" (workers control, dual power, armed struggle, only solution—revolution), and a yet-to-be-worked-out program for the working class (since that is a later stage).

It is clear by virtue of the very nature of our organizations and their type of activity that winning a vanguard of the working class to our banner is part of the struggle to win the leadership of the majority of the working class. But this vanguard must be won by proving through action as well as propaganda that we have the best program, the best strategy, and the best tactics for winning the leadership of the masses and for leading struggles to victory. The best elements of the vanguard must be won to our

sections by systematically educating them in our program which is oriented to the masses. The fact that the IEC majority sees our program for winning the "vanguard of a mass character" as separate from a program for the masses, gives rise to a very clear tendency of the following type: "through tactical initiatives in the vanguard (exemplary actions, minority violence, campaigns around the concerns of the vanguard) let's first build organizations of the size of the ex-Ligue Communiste; we'll take up the strategy for winning over the masses later on." In doing this, we arrive at an incorrect concept of the relationship between our sections and other politically advanced elements, and of the relationship between our sections and the masses. We thus arrive at two politically distinct steps in building the revolutionary party. The danger in doing this lies in the fact that we cut ourselves off from possibilities of leading the working masses, leaving their day-to-day struggles in the hands of the reformist and centrist forces, and run the risk of remaining forever in the "first stage."

19. The line of the IEC majority is a line of adaptation to the political moods of the "vanguard of a mass character." The clearest signs of this are the ultraleft errors we've been making for a long time: guerrilla warfare in Latin America, the errors in Irish work, Vietnam work, minority violence, etc.

The June 21 demonstration called by the ex-Ligue Communiste proves this completely. As Comrade Joe Hansen explains in his document "The Underlying Differences in Method," (*IIDB*, Vol X, No. 12) it was correct to organize an action in response to the fascist-racist offensive. However, the character of the June 21 demonstration was determined not by the objective of mobilizing the working class and its organizations to answer the fascist offensive, but, as the "22 Theses" adopted by the Third Congress of the Ligue Communiste explicitly states, the antifascist policy of the Ligue was based on the concept of "minority violence," on the supposed need to reintroduce violence in the class struggle.

The adaptation to the political moods and concerns of the "new mass vanguard" is not limited to ultraleftism alone, however. There is an opportunist side of this adaptation

also. In this sense the Ligue Communiste's error of calling for a vote for the Union of the Left (including the Left Radicals) complements the other series of errors perfectly. In making an ultraleft error of seeing the question of "armed struggle" (i.e., for or against the peaceful road to socialism) as the dividing line between revolutionists and non-revolutionists in the 1973 legislative elections, they missed the real *class* dividing line. Differentiation of ourselves from all those forces engaged in a class-collaborationist maneuver and therefore rejecting a vote for the Union of the Left should have been the basis of our intervention in the elections.

20. To our criticisms supporters of the IEC majority have retorted: "Where is your alternative?"

We have no intention of presenting an alternative of the same nature as the European document. We do not intend to write a document with a dogmatic prognosis for all Europe, a document that makes an abstraction of all the differences between the various countries and fails to situate capitalist Europe in its world context. Nor will we write a document prescribing a series of tactics for all the European sections.

The discussion on Europe throughout the ranks of the International, including its European sections, began only a few months ago, and on the basis of a document that has greatly obscured rather than clarified the problems and perspectives facing European Trotskyists. Out of the fruitful discussion and collective elaboration now under way, a document presenting the general lines of a correct analysis and orientation will emerge. This is a process we intend to contribute to both internationally and on the level of our national sections.

December 12, 1973

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The New Zealand Trotskyists and the Protest Movement Against the War in Vietnam

By George Fyson

The debate on Indochina and the antiwar movement is an important issue in the international discussion, as the IEC Majority Tendency emphasised by placing the article "The Debate on Indochina," by Sterne, as one of their five central documents for translation and distribution prior to the world congress. A discussion of the issues involved in building the international antiwar movement is particularly valuable because it relates to the question of how a comparatively small group of revolutionists can exercise a major influence in the defence of a revolution in another country, and in the process win recruits to Trotskyism.

In New Zealand, we in the Socialist Action League feel that we have had a particular success in this regard. In fact, for a period of three years from the time of the League's founding in August 1969, antiwar work was our single most important activity, and it was the area from which nearly every new recruit came. This article aims to explain the success of our antiwar work, and to reply to the criticisms directed against our line in the antiwar movement by the IEC majority comrades.

Two Different Antiwar Movements, One Inside and One Outside North America?

What we took to be the official line of the Fourth International at the time of the League's founding was contained in the Political Report to the December 1969 IEC meeting, by Ernest Germain. (*IIDB*, Vol. VIII, No. 1, January 1971). In this report Comrade Germain expressed the view that the international antiwar movement consisted of two parts—that inside the United States, and that in other countries. In the United States, he said, revolutionists should build a mass movement for the immediate withdrawal of U.S. armed forces, but in other countries "they have to identify themselves clearly and fully with the South Vietnamese revolution; and they have to try to do this not only in words but also through certain specific forms of struggle that indicate clearly they are revolutionists and not reformists or pacifists. That is why most of the sections of the Fourth International outside of the U.S. have correctly taken the lead in using slogans like 'Victory to the NLF', 'Victory to the Vietnamese Revolution', and giving the antiwar movement as militant forms of activity as possible." This is because, says Germain, in countries other than the U.S., "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."

In 1969, Germain still hesitated to make a blanket prescription of this approach for all countries outside the U.S., allowing "the possible exception of those countries that have sent soldiers themselves to Vietnam (and in view of the limited size of these contingents, not even that is absolutely certain). . . ." So, for Trotskyists in countries such as New Zealand and Australia, there was no clear orientation. However, more recently, Germain and other leaders of the IEC Majority Tendency have shifted much further in the direction of advocating a "Victory to the NLF" orientation for every country outside the U.S., and even calling into question the "Out Now" strategy there.

The New Zealand Antiwar Movement

The contingent of New Zealand troops in Vietnam was very small—never more than a few hundred men—but it was of far greater political significance than its size. The contingents from New Zealand and Australia in particular were utilised in the United States and elsewhere to bolster the myth that the war was one of the "free world" against "Communist aggression."

In this country the Trotskyists saw that a withdrawal of New Zealand troops and other forms of governmental support for the war would have a similar political effect, in the reverse direction. Such a withdrawal would show the world that the Australian and New Zealand people did not feel themselves threatened by any "Communist aggression" and that they wanted to dissociate themselves from the U.S. war against the Vietnamese. This step, in our opinion, would play a not unimportant part in helping turn millions of people throughout the world and inside the United States itself against the imperialist war.

To this end we exerted ourselves to help generate the most powerful display of opposition within New Zealand, by building a mass movement demanding that the United States and its "allies" withdraw totally and immediately from South East Asia, and that all forms of N.Z. support to the war be stopped. This "Out Now" strategy was both the *necessary* and the *sufficient* basis for the most effective defence of the Vietnamese revolution.

The vast majority of those who were drawn into activity around this demand were not conscious revolutionists or even "anti-imperialists," though undoubtedly most of them were radicalised to varying degrees through participating in the mass mobilisations. In 1971, on two occasions, over 30,000 New Zealanders marched in the streets demanding an immediate New Zealand and U.S. withdrawal from Indochina—probably the largest pro-

test demonstrations ever seen in this small country. Two weeks after the second of these protests the National government announced that New Zealand's troops were to be withdrawn from Vietnam.

Despite this withdrawal, New Zealand support for the war continued in the form of recognition of the Thieu puppet regime, membership of the aggressive SEATO, ANZUS and other treaties which legitimise the U.S. military presence in South East Asia, and the maintenance of an N.Z. Army training unit in South Vietnam. A further mobilisation demanding a total end to New Zealand support for the war and immediate U.S. withdrawal from South East Asia was held in July 1972, with a similarly massive turnout to the 1971 marches.

In New Zealand, contrary to what Comrade Germain asserted in 1969, there existed the "possibility of making an immediate direct contribution to the victory of the South Vietnamese revolution." All the New Zealand troops were eventually withdrawn; the antiwar movement and its success were an inspiration to antiwar activists internationally (especially in the United States); and the mass protests laid the basis for other direct action against the United States and its war backers, such as the N.Z. Seamen's Union strike in support of the antiwar mobilisation on April 30, 1971, and the Australian maritime boycott in December 1972.

Our first priority was not to demarcate the "revolutionaries" from the reformists, the pro-Moscow Stalinists and the pacifists, by promoting the "most militant" slogans and forms of activity, as Comrade Germain would have it, but to try and *unite* all these diverse forces into meaningful political action. This is what the antiwar mobilisations did: they forced ever wider sections of the Labour Party and the trade union movement to give their support, it drew in significant sections of the churches, and it even forced the participation of the little groups of ultra-lefts and the super-sectarians (such as the Mao-Stalinist N.Z. Communist Party, which denounced the mobilisations as "counter-revolutionary").

What *did* demarcate the revolutionists was that we were the most consistent proponents and builders of the mass mobilisations. To get the marches under way we had to fight tooth and nail against almost all the other tendencies from pacifist through to ultraleft at different times, at the various national and local meetings of the antiwar coalitions. By far the strongest of these tendencies was that section of newly-radicalised youth, often under the influence of the Maoists, who wanted protest activity to be built around explicit "solidarity" slogans such as "Victory to the NLF." These people constituted the New Zealand component of Comrades Germain and Sterne's "vanguard," who regarded abstract proclamations of individual "solidarity" with the Vietnamese revolution as being far more important than the building of a mass antiwar movement. And often at the same time as these forces decried the "Out Now" slogans as being insufficiently "revolutionary," they equally opposed the tactic of peaceful marches, preferring "more militant" activities such as attempted confrontations with the police. The fact that such "more militant" sloganeering and activities could only serve to *discourage* mass participation in antiwar actions was completely irrelevant in their eyes. These "radical" witness-bearers were the *rearguard* of the anti-

war activists.

There certainly was pressure on us to "tail-end" in the antiwar movement. However, it was not primarily pressure to adapt to the reformists, but rather to the ultra-lefts, whose opposition to mass marches and to the Socialist Action League's role in them at times reached a frenzied level. The hostility of some ultraleft forces to our consistency and our success drove them to acts of harassment and intimidation, a continuous slander campaign, and denunciation of us as "traitors" and "scabs." In order to build the most effective mass protests we often found ourselves, in Comrade Sterne's words, "going against the current of the 'natural' activity of the radicalised militants," or at least against a major section of them.

At times it may have been easier for us to give in to this pressure, particularly with the assistance of Comrade Germain's rationalisations, such as his discovery that "the duality of tactics between the comrades in North America and the comrades in the rest of the world is a result of (the) difference in the objective roots and function of the antiwar movement, as well as the difference in mass consciousness inside the antiwar movement in these two parts of the world." (Political Report to the December 1969 IEC.) If we had applied the orientation of Sterne and Germain there simply would have been no mass mobilisations against the war in this country in the 1970-72 period.

Was it a Crime to Learn from the SWP?

One of Comrade Sterne's "Four Criticisms of the SWP" is that they advocated "the extension of their NPAC policy to the entire International and [failed] to understand the specific nature of this policy." ("The Debate on Indochina," *IIDB*, Vol. X, No. 7, June 1973, page 14.) But as Comrade Geoff Mirelowitz pointed out in his article "The SWP's Role in the Antiwar Movement" (*IIDB*, Vol. X, No. 15, October 1973), the SWP did not insist that every move made by NPAC be copied elsewhere in the world, but rather that the strategy of building a mass antiwar movement be a central part of the work of every section of the Fourth International.

In New Zealand we were inspired by the mass antiwar demonstrations in the U.S. as well as those elsewhere such as the march of 100,000 in London, in October 1968. In addition we learned a great deal from the methods of the SWP in building united front antiwar actions, and were able to apply much of it directly to our work in New Zealand. It is only to be regretted that these lessons have been rejected or ignored in other sections, as is indicated by Comrade Sterne.

Two Slogans—One for the "Vanguard" and One for the Masses?

In New Zealand we were charged by some forces on the left with not raising slogans such as "Victory to the NLF" in addition to "Out Now." Our critics, like Comrade Sterne, held the view that such slogans were necessary to meet "the needs of the advanced layers of the movement." Such a confused position was most often advanced by forces who were very much on the sidelines of the

antiwar movement, but who wanted to somehow accommodate to both conflicting sides in the debate over the movement's central strategy. These armchair revolutionaries could not appreciate how the "Victory to the NLF" slogan *contradicted* the goal of building mass demonstrations. This has been clearly shown in Comrade Geoff Mirelowitz's contribution (*IIDB*, Vol. X, No. 15, page 33).

These critics also misunderstood how people become radicalised to the point where they explicitly support the Indochinese revolution. People involved in the protest movement are not radicalised by having an NLF flag or "Victory" placard thrust into their hands, but by receiving clear explanations of the issues at stake in Vietnam and in the antiwar movement, and the relationship of these questions to broader issues. It is the role of the Trotskyist press to carry through this latter task, and we in New Zealand lived up to our responsibilities in this area. On every mass mobilisation, we sold several thousand copies of our newspaper, which featured material on the Vietnamese revolution. In addition we held educational and forums, and distributed other socialist literature to antiwar activists. In this way we helped large numbers of people to come to consciously support the Vietnamese revolution and to adopt a socialist viewpoint in general, while at the same time understanding the need to build an effective mass united antiwar campaign on an "Out Now" basis. These people were the real vanguard of the N.Z. antiwar movement, many of whom are now members or sympathisers of the Socialist Action League.

Effects of the Antiwar Movement in New Zealand

Through participating in the antiwar movement and coming into contact with radical ideas for the first time, thousands of young people were radicalised in New Zealand.

Vietnam and the mass antiwar movement here and overseas were central in bringing about a turn in the whole political situation in New Zealand, marking an end to the deep-seated anti-communist attitudes which had been predominant since the time of the Cold War. Support for imperialist wars is at its lowest level ever—which is significant in a country that has been heavily committed to such wars under both British and U.S. auspices

for over one hundred years. The antiwar demonstrations popularised the concept of street protests and paved the way for militant action on an ever-widening range of issues. Just one indicator of this general shift to the left was the landslide election victory of the Labour Party in November 1972.

The antiwar movement was a test for the newly-established Trotskyist forces in New Zealand. And in our opinion we met the challenge and the opportunities before us. This is because we used the transitional approach in building the antiwar movement, based on making defensively-formulated principled demands, whose logic ultimately involved a revolutionary victory in Indochina, but which at the same time were able to bring into action the weight of significant numbers of workers, students and others. We adopted and adapted the "Out Now" strategy applied by the SWP comrades in the U.S.A., and rejected the alternative orientation of our ultraleft opponents in New Zealand and its "Trotskyist rationale" put forward by Comrade Germain in 1969 and now by the IEC Majority Tendency.

And as a result of our orientation in the antiwar movement, have we been bypassed by the radical vanguard, have we been politically discredited in the eyes of "advanced layers"? In the eyes of the IEC majority, probably so. But the facts speak otherwise.

It has been through our antiwar work that the New Zealand Trotskyists were able to expand from a tiny group based in one locality, publishing a mimeographed broadsheet, into a movement with national influence and organisation, with the widest-read radical paper in the country and a considerably enhanced standing among a broad layer of young activists, trade unionists and intellectuals.

While it is not unlikely that we could have sped up the pace of our growth in the short term at least, by accommodating to our radical opponents, it could only have been at the expense of programmatic clarity, by smoothing over fundamental disagreements, of which the "two-level" antiwar strategy is a classic example.

It has been this programmatic clarity that has won *Socialist Action* such a broad readership and the Socialist Action League a widespread, if in some circles begrudging, respect.

December 1973

Reply to the Comrades in the SWP

By R. Perin

In her document of February 27, 1973, replying to the European document, Comrade Mary-Alice Waters seriously questions our capacities for mass intervention among the youth: by rejecting the document on the "Worldwide Youth Radicalization" in 1969 and by adopting the European document, the ex-Ligue Communiste denied all possibility of a mass struggle in this sector and abandoned the tasks necessary for the emergence of such struggles in favor of giving priority to an intervention in the vanguard. This is the substance of the criticism made of us.

But scarcely two weeks after this document appeared, the ex-Ligue Communiste found itself swept to the head of the largest youth mobilization ever carried out in France. How could this have happened, according to the thinking of the comrades in the SWP?

We find the answer in an internal document of the SWP written by Comrade Jane Roland of Boston and entitled "The Ligue Communiste, the Debré Struggles, and the European Document" (*SWP Discussion Bulletin*, Vol. 31, No. 22, July 1973).

Yes, this comrade writes, "the Ligue Communiste was the recognized leadership of these massive struggles." But solely because "our comrades' work in the youth struggles followed the line not of the European document under discussion but the line projected by the United Secretariat document adopted prior to the 1969 world congress, 'The Worldwide Youth Radicalization.' The Ligue followed an orientation in the intervention that we of the SWP would recommend."

Thus, one might say that the Ligue played this role "despite the European document." How did the Ligue ignore in practice the European document? Admitting that "the Debré struggles proved that the student movement isn't dead."

But above all: "Did the Ligue intervene, then, as part of their plan to win hegemony within the mass vanguard? No—because those were not struggles of the mass vanguard. Their intervention was directly into the struggles of the masses—the masses of students, and the extension of the action into the working class."

Thus we encounter here the *totally* static vision of youth struggles held by the comrades of the SWP. Yes, we addressed ourselves directly to the great masses of youth. Yes, we firmly refused to follow the path proposed by "Revolution!"—which consisted of remaining content with regrouping the "left wing" of the movement. But if we were able to achieve the former, it's basically because we have *gradually, since 1968, won hegemony in the broad vanguard that exists in the high schools.* It's this broad vanguard that *initially and above all* had to be regrouped in the CCLD (Comités Contre la Loi Debré—

Committees Against the Debré Law) in order to launch the struggle. For *the Ligue wouldn't have been able to do anything at all with just its Red Circles.*

This broad vanguard consists of the 10, 20, 50 people in each high school who are ready to struggle but still fluctuate between the various organizations. This broad vanguard is the layer we have tried for four years to educate about its anti-imperialist tasks, the layer that we have pulled away from the grip of the reformists, that we have for months tried to win away from the spontanéist current. This broad vanguard also constitutes those militants to whom we have tried to offer perspectives *once the mobilizations are over.*

Thus, there is nothing contradictory between regrouping this broad vanguard in conjunctural structures (CCLD) or permanent ones (FSI [Indochina Solidarity Committee], CDA [Committee to Defend Draftees]), and addressing ourselves to the masses of high school students. *Both* should be carried out. To believe that we could dispense with this battle for hegemony in the broad vanguard is to maintain fantastic illusions as to the level of consciousness of the great masses of high school students and youth, apart from specific periods such as May 1968 or the months of March and April 1973. And this brings up another aspect of the debate.

The comrades of the SWP tell us: As you can see quite clearly, Vergeat and Delphin were wrong in writing ("Preparatory Text for the 1971 Conference of the Leaderships of the European Sections" [*International Internal Discussion Bulletin*, Vol. 9, No. 5, November 1972]) that this movement "appears less and less as an active political force." *We never said there would be no more mass demonstrations by students.* But we did say, and we can say it again here, that the student movement as we knew it in 1968 is dead. It can no longer play the role of an "active political force" or the role of a "tactical vanguard" that it played in that period. Because in the meantime the workers movement—after ten years of quiescence following the Gaullists' rise to power—has taken center stage in the social scene. *And because the formation of new vanguards is now taking place outside the student movement, even if it still obtains many of its forces there.* The movement against the Debré law *changes nothing in this analysis.* On the contrary, it confirms it: the student movement at no time played the role of detonator, nor did it at any time deeply threaten the foundations of the bourgeois state solely with its own forces. This obviously doesn't mean that there's no need to intervene in this movement: the document drawing the balance sheet shows the role it played.

A final remark: in her reply to the European document, Comrade Mary-Alice Waters wrote, "Without an indepen-

dent youth organization, our ability to effectively intervene in the struggles that erupt in the high schools and universities is reduced." (*IIDB*, Vol. 10, No. 3, p. 19.)

The facts prove the contrary. The militants in the Red Circles have demonstrated their capacity for leading such struggles. Yes, replies Comrade Roland, but think what additional gains we could have made *afterwards* if we had had an *independent* youth organization. And this comrade then criticizes the fact that at the national conference of the Red Circles, "older political people" (members of the Political Bureau of the ex-Ligue Communiste, as it turns out) led the workshops. Given the present

conditions, the organizational independence proposed by the SWP comrades would be only *formal* independence. Let's note first of all that the Red Circle membership doubled in two months. And that the Red Circle militants weren't calling for formal political independence but essentially for *political instruments* for their day-to-day intervention. In our opinion, the cadres of the ex-Ligue Communiste were in the best position to provide them with this. And it is in large part thanks to those "older political people" that these young high school militants, this time by themselves, took part in the experience of leading a mass movement.

Translation Changes for "The Beginning of a Revision of Marxism," by Ernest Germain

The following changes in the translation of "The Beginning of a Revision of Marxism," (*IIDB* No. 24, December 1973) were submitted by Ernest Germain.

1. p. 23, first column, last paragraph: Instead of "We believe that fundamental aspects of the Marxist theory on the national question are involved (not just those cited above, obviously, but rather all the aspects on which there was disagreement during the discussion)," read:

"We believe that fundamental aspects of the Marxist theory on the national question are involved (not all fundamental aspects, obviously, but those on which there was disagreement during the discussion)."

2. p. 26, second column, last paragraph: Instead of "Comrade Horowitz agrees with our definition of nationalism as an ideology that was correct in the past," read:

"Comrade Horowitz agrees that our definition of nationalism as an ideology was correct in the past."

3. p. 31, first column, third paragraph: Instead of ". . . by means of a struggle to achieve in the first place the tasks that were not accomplished by the bourgeois-democratic revolution, above all the agrarian question and the national question," read:

". . . by means of a struggle to achieve in the first place the non-accomplished tasks of the bourgeois democratic revolution, above all the agrarian question and the national question."

4. p. 33, first column, first paragraph: Instead of "Weren't these wars justified by the fact that they led in the direction of a socialist revolution?" read:

"Were these wars perhaps just wars only inasmuch as they would lead to a socialist revolution?"

5. p. 33, second column, third paragraph, last sentence:

Instead of "It is the product of a process of anti-imperialist struggle, of a process that has been frozen since its inception and has not been completed. . . ." read:

"It is a product of a process of anti-imperialist struggle, of a process that has been frozen in its inception and has not been completed. . . ."

6. p. 34, first column, first paragraph: Instead of ". . . expropriation of the big foreign and 'national' landlords. . . ." read:

". . . expropriation of the big foreign and 'national' owners. . . ." [this does not apply only to land but also to industry, transport, public services, banks, etc.]

7. p. 35, first column, third paragraph: Instead of "The most burning tasks of the revolution in the former countries are the tasks that were not resolved by the bourgeois-democratic revolution. . . ." read:

"The most burning tasks of the revolution in the former countries are the non-resolved tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution. . . ."

8. p. 35, second column, first paragraph, last sentence: Instead of ". . . because the proletariat and the heavy industry predominate in Spain. . . ." read:

". . . because the proletariat and large scale industry predominate in Spain. . . ."

9. p. 35, second column, fifth paragraph: Instead of "If it must be acknowledged that the SWP leadership approves and supports it, an entire sector of the Trotskyist movement. . . ." read:

"If it should be confirmed that the SWP leadership approves and supports it, an entire sector of the Trotskyist movement. . . ."

December 31, 1973