

# **INTERNAL INFORMATION BULLETIN**

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### **Introductory Note**

The first two items in this bulletin were submitted to the International Internal Discussion Bulletin by the political bureaus of the British and Japanese sections, respectively. The United Secretariat majority rejected publication of them until some future, unspecified date. Because of the general interest these two contributions have we are publishing them now for the membership of the Socialist Workers party.

Comrade Wilcox is a leader of a minority tendency (Tendency A) in the International Marxist Group but is a supporter of the International Majority Tendency (IMT).

Comrade Sakai's contribution "On the International" is based on a document adopted by the political bureau of the Japanese Revolutionary Communist League.

The second contribution of Comrade Sakai, "We, the Post-Trotsky Trotskyists," and the exchanges of correspondence related to that article, present some of Comrade Sakai's views on topics of particular interest to American revolutionists.

# CRITICAL NOTES ON "THE BUILDING OF REVOLUTIONARY PARTIES IN CAPITALIST EUROPE" (EPD—European Perspectives Document)

by Wilcox

Tendency A from the outset clearly situated itself upon the terrain mapped out in the EPD [European Perspectives Document—"The Building of Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe," IIDB, Vol IX, No. 5]. However, we also from the outset maintained that the EPD by no means furnished all the elements necessary for a revolutionary intervention in the British class struggle (both these positions were adopted in the Klein/Wilcox "Winter Crisis" document). Until now we have not attempted to establish whether there is a systematic political *pattern* to the inadequacies of the EPD, and whether these inadequacies stem from simply a lack of specificity about each national conjuncture or rather from a systematic absence in the account given of every national conjuncture. It is the aim of these notes to explore these questions.

## Strengths of the EPD

The EPD was based on an analysis both that the capitalist economies were entering a new period of crisis and that this was crisis of capitalist social relations as a whole, with a different structure and rhythm from previous crises because of the new forms of reproduction of labour power. The overall crisis of the bourgeois order led to the emergence of a *new mass vanguard* capable of moving into action against the capitalist system independently of the Stalinist and Social Democratic leaderships. Moreover, the capitalist crisis generated an inherent tendency to provoke confrontations between a newly awakened mass movement and the capitalist state. The task of the sections of the International was to seek to hegemonise the new mass vanguards by becoming the most lucid and consistent exponents of all tactics for strengthening and extending the mass struggle in the direction of the emergence of institutions of dual power.

Although the above very bald summary of the central theses of the EPD does not do justice to the nuances and refinements to be found in the document, it does indicate some of its underlying strengths. Firstly, the USFI majority distinguished itself from nearly every other political current claiming to be Trotskyist by its understanding that May 1968 was a turning point marking a new phase of capitalist crisis and of mass upsurge. The development of the class struggle in Italy, Britain, the Iberian peninsula and elsewhere in capitalist Europe has thoroughly vindicated this position. Moreover, the novel form and content of this crisis have been more adequately recognised by the USFI than by any other current—this is the reason that it was able to achieve a better understanding of the student movement than other currents. Most critics of the USFI completely fail to grasp these strengths of the USFI perspective. They do not see that an orientation to the youth radicalisation required much more than simply "presenting revolutionary ideas" or the Trotskyist programme to them—that, in fact, "revolution-

ary ideas" could only gain ground among the youth to the extent that they were wedded to *initiatives in action*. Moreover, the USFI was able to build sections throughout Europe precisely because of these political positions which are most attacked by other currents in the Trotskyist movement: the application of the entry tactic in the fifties and sixties, the theses advanced on the Cuban revolution and the Vietnamese revolution and the orientation to the new mass vanguard. Throughout Europe the FI groupings distinguished themselves by an early appreciation of the significance of the Cuban revolution and the Vietnamese revolution and thereby were enabled to achieve a primitive accumulation of cadre and to present the revolutionary programme to the radicalising layer of youth in a very concrete and pertinent fashion. The debate within the USFI on Stalinism, however provisional and preliminary in its conclusions, was an indispensable basis for these practical political orientations. Unquestionably, there were adaptations to the ultra-leftism of the newly radicalised layers and there were illusions in the possibilities of the guerrilla movements, but the fundamental orientation was correct. Thus the USFI must insist on the vindication of its fundamental positions reflected in the ability of its French section to take a whole series of "initiatives in action" from its presence on the barricades in May 1968 to its recent role in the French army mutinies and Postal Workers' strike. In general, the healthiest sections of the International are those whose leadership reflects the whole cycle of experiences from entrism, through solidarity movements and youth radicalisation up to the tactics for gaining hegemony within the vanguard and implantation within the working class outlined in the EPD. Having indicated these points, however, it is now necessary to consider the problems posed by this latter document.

## The Unresolved Problems posed by the EPD

One difficulty presented by the EPD is that the version of this document that has been most influential in the IMG and some other sections is not the version actually adopted at the Tenth World Congress.\* Many of the weaknesses of the first draft of the EPD (published in *International*) were partially remedied by amendments: e.g. the omission of any serious discussion of immigrant workers. These amendments helped to improve the document, but they did not by any means fully resolve the problems it poses, some of which stem from a plethora of ambiguities and overgeneralised formulas and qualifications. Underlying most of the inadequacies of the EPD is a failure to properly

\*[The final version, as edited by the IMT following its adoption by the 1974 World Congress, is available in a special issue of *Intercontinental Press*, "Documents of the World Congress of the Fourth International," Vol. 12, No. 46, December 23, 1974, \$2.50/£1.]

grasp the strictly political dimension in the capitalist crisis, in the impact of the rest of the world on Europe and in the tasks of revolutionaries. Thus the account given of the crisis of the political order (section 3 of the document) is much weaker than the account given of the economic crisis and the crisis of social relations; the account given of the emergence of newly radicalised layers is much stronger than the analysis of the traditional political organisations of the working class; the perspective given of the rise of mass struggles greatly oversimplifies the task of giving a sharp political focus to this struggle. Formal reference to the Transitional Programme, to the slogan of the Workers' Government and to the need to build revolutionary parties is made but none of these questions is directly linked to the form of the political crisis of the bourgeois political order and of the workers' parties which presently inhabit that order. Let us take these points one by one.

### The Shape of the Political Crisis

On the economic plane the theses advanced in the EPD are based on a coherent body of theory: namely Mandel's *Late Capitalism*. This work is a sustained attempt to analyse the nature of the post-war boom and the inherent limits to that boom. This theory is certainly open to discussion but it had the enormous merit of predicting the generalised world recession and beginning to identify the novel elements in the crisis. The most debatable aspect of the analysis is probably the adoption of a modified version of Kondratiev's theory of "long waves"; significantly enough, Trotsky rejected this theory partly on the grounds that it placed undue emphasis on technological factors and neglected the impact of political events (wars, revolutions etc.) on the economic trade cycle. In *Late Capitalism* the sections dealing with the state are the least developed. But in the domain of economic analysis there is at least a well worked out body of theory which can be the subject of discussion. Moreover the economic theory also leads into certain general theses about the crisis of social expenditure and the capacity of the capitalist system to satisfy the new needs which the post-war boom has helped to bring into existence on a mass scale. In particular areas—e.g. the nature of the student movement and more recently the nature of women's oppression—the USFI has also been able to draw on a wide-ranging theoretical discussion both inside and outside the ranks of the F.I. Again there may, as yet, be few really firm conclusions but at least there is a clear basis for discussion and for the elaboration of provisional perspectives of intervention. When we turn to section three of the document, an altogether different situation prevails: the document invokes a whole series of concepts such as that of "the strong state" or the "decay of bourgeois democracy" which have not been established, even in a provisional manner, by any underlying body of theory.

### Marxism and Bourgeois Democracy

Neither inside nor outside the ranks of the FI is there any sustained Marxist attempt to theorise the nature of bourgeois democracy and its contradictions. Most work by Marxists on the contemporary capitalist state are designed to prove that it is indeed capitalist (e.g. Miliband or

Poulantzas). This is a valuable and important task of demystification, but it does not solve the problem of the specificity of bourgeois democracy nor does it identify the typical expression of capitalist contradictions in such political regimes. Marx tended to regard Bonapartism rather than bourgeois democracy as the normal form of bourgeois political regime—it was, he said, the "religion of the bourgeoisie". Engels, in the *Origins* and other texts, was much more perceptive, recognising that the representative state would be the typical regime of advanced capitalism.

Ever since Lenin wrote *State and Revolution* Marxists have attacked bourgeois democracy on the grounds that it atomises and fragments the masses, pulverising the working class and separating politics from the organisation of the working class at the point of production, the ultimate source of the proletariat's political power. This critique has been echoed in different ways by Lukacs (in his *Lenin*), Colletti (in *From Rousseau to Lenin*) and Poulantzas (in the section of *Political Power and Social Class* devoted to the representative state). So far as they go all these critiques are perfectly valid. Bourgeois democracy does indeed seek to dominate the working class in the ways described. But the crucial element that they miss out is the special way in which bourgeois democracy seeks to integrate the working class, permitting, or being forced to permit, a degree of independent working class organisation, in trade unions and political parties. Bourgeois democracy is, in fact, a specialised mechanism for (1) Securing the formal consent of the governed to their own exploitation and oppression (2) Integrating the working class collectively through its own organisations (3) Favouring that fraction of the ruling class best able to integrate the masses. The source for this approach is, of course, Trotsky's *Struggle Against Fascism in Germany* and some suggestive passages in Lenin's *Left Wing Communism*. Some of the most important theses on this question are to be found in these texts as cited in the Klein/Wilcox "Winter Crisis" document.

### The Significance of Bourgeois Democracy in Post War Europe

The importance of identifying the contradictions of bourgeois democracy stems from the fact that this has been the normal regime of capital in the advanced countries since the end of the Second World War. The functioning of relatively stable bourgeois democratic regimes was made possible in the immediate post-war period by the failure of the major workers' parties to propel forward the permanent revolutionary implications of the struggle against fascism and fascist occupation. This has not been an entirely smooth process—the wars in Algeria, Vietnam and Ireland have generated forces which undermine a parliamentary regime. But so far at least it is striking that these regimes have been able to survive even quite powerful upsurges of mass struggle and even quite serious attempts to sabotage them (Watergate, the Algerian putsch, the Italian military conspiracies, etc.).

Because bourgeois democracy rests on mass consent as well as the bourgeois state's monopoly of violence, it is particularly suited to the task of absorbing and recuperat-

ing any upsurge in the mass struggle. Far from being a weak form of bourgeois rule it has proved remarkably resilient in the face of proletarian offensives. If we consider the list of revolutionary and protorevolutionary upsurges mentioned in section seven of the EPD, it is striking that nearly every single one of them was initially contained and defeated by a bourgeois democratic regime, even if that regime was subsequently overthrown from the right. For obvious reasons a bourgeois democratic regime allows especially great room for manoeuvre to the reformist or centrist leaders of the workers' movement and makes use of them to absorb the working class upsurge. It is particularly striking that bourgeois democratic regimes either forestall the emergence of institutions of dual power (Britain, 1926, or France, 1968) or otherwise neutralize and absorb those elements of dual power that have emerged (the workers' councils in Germany, 1919, Italy, 1920). In general it seems that embryonic institutions of dual power can be established more readily in the context of a collapsing absolutist state or totalitarian regime (i.e., Russia in 1905 and 1917; Portugal today). Such regimes are not based on such a defined separation of the political and the economic levels of the social formation and they do not possess the same sophisticated array of mechanisms for integrating the masses. The conclusions we should draw from this is that in regimes of bourgeois democracy, far from there being a semi-spontaneous tendency for dual power to arise in a crisis, the likelihood of dual power institutions consolidating themselves will critically depend on the tactics and intervention of the revolutionary vanguard. The task of this vanguard must be to use an intervention inside and outside the bourgeois political order to stimulate the mass struggle and to orient the mass struggle so that it is capable of exploding the contradictions of bourgeois democracy. The Transitional Programme, the slogan of the workers' government and of workers' control of production are vital instruments in carrying through these tasks. United actions around transitional demands and workers' control initiatives are designed to encourage an organisation of the masses which bourgeois democratic regimes will find impossible to absorb. Intervention in the bourgeois political order at every level provides an indispensable sounding board for agitation and organisation around the transitional programme taken as a whole. The slogan of the workers' government is a crucial device for confronting the manoeuvres of the reformists and centrists and indicating to the mass movement the road to workers' power. Above all agitation and propaganda guided by these concepts enables the revolutionary vanguard to accomplish that "conquest of the masses" which precedes and accompanies the conquest of power.

Because it fails to assess the peculiar strengths and weaknesses of bourgeois democracy the EPD very much underplays the need to project a rounded-out Transitional Programme and the slogan of a workers' government in favour of initiatives in action and agitation designed to stimulate and extend the mass struggle. However, beyond a certain point the mass struggle cannot be indefinitely extended and stimulated simply by exhortation. It runs up against the complexity of the social formation and the recuperative mechanisms of bourgeois democracy, notably the trade unions and the reformist workers' parties. And to the extent that it poses a real threat to the bourgeois order it runs up against the repressive apparatus of the

bourgeois state. To ensure that the working class vanguard can undertake to lead the masses in a fundamental confrontation with the bourgeois power—and do so with the greatest chances of victory—the revolutionaries must master a whole combination of tactics prior to and during the decisive confrontation. The revolutionaries must know how to combine intervention in the mass struggle with united front initiatives, with military work, with agitation around democratic demands, with electoral work, with an increasingly precise and concrete conception of the nature and functioning of institutions of dual power. As we shall see the EPD is quite sketchy on many of these crucial questions and future perspectives for Europe will have to be greatly developed, drawing upon the most advanced experience of the recent period and indicating more precisely a rounded out revolutionary strategy. Centrally this will involve a more developed sense of the full programmatic basis of the revolutionary intervention since it is a proper grasp of the content and method of the Transitional Programme which can alone equip the mass struggle with the necessary sharp political focus and enable it to overcome all the unevenness spontaneously produced by the bourgeois social formation. We will now turn to a detailed examination of these points.

### The Limits of Spontaneity

In the pre-Congress discussion the Japanese section points out that the EPD did not display an adequate grasp of the role of the transitional programme for social revolution (see IIDB No. 2, 1974). In fact, Section 7, sub-section (a) looked forward to a mass upsurge which would express "*the workers' instinctive attempt to take the leadership of society and to rebuild it along the lines of their socialist programme.*" This formulation contains the seeds both of an original and profound observation about the nature of mass consciousness and of a dangerous oversimplification of the problems facing revolutionaries. It is indeed the case that mass spontaneity in a revolutionary and pre-revolutionary situation has a protean nature. For example, in Chile between 1970 and 1973 the masses threw up a great many tactics of anti-capitalist struggle which should have been promoted and generalised by any revolutionary vanguard. The masses are necessarily more inventive than even the most advanced vanguard if ever they are aroused to defend their own interests. Moreover in most countries the working class inherits an accumulated political tradition which incorporates many anti-capitalist, even "socialist" elements (Mandel's *Leninist Theory of Organisation* develops this theme in an original argument). However, to acknowledge all this is not to say that they *instinctively* wish to lead society or possess a socialist programme. If this was the case it would be sufficient merely to point out the most advanced and efficacious methods of struggle, to propagate the need for a revolutionary workers' power and to denounce the reformist parties. Of course, all these are indeed among the tasks of revolutionaries, but propagated in isolation they lead to frustration and defeat. It is *also* necessary to advance the demands which will most effectively mobilise a mighty alliance of the exploited and oppressed against the capitalist state, and to advance these demands in every

available arena, in the mass organisations, in the electoral arena, in the armed forces. Advanced *methods of struggle* can only be sustained for long by a *coherent programme*. The fraternal critique we should make of the MIR in Chile should focus on its failure to find the right combination of tactics, capable of consolidating and extending the organs of mass struggle at the base, *by challenging the political framework which had been established by the traditional workers' parties*. Despite the many exemplary features of the struggle of the MIR, they failed to develop the necessary tactics for confronting the bourgeois political order and the traditional workers' parties—in consequence their conception of dual power was also arbitrary and imprecise.

Every bourgeois social formation displays great unevenness and complexity. Every European social formation presents an original combination of the forces of world politics and world economy and each is deeply marked by the history of wars, revolutions and counter-revolutions. It is not only the level of mass struggle which distinguishes between the different social formations, but also the nature and history of the ruling political order and of the capitalist economy, the political traditions of the mass of the working class and the particular form of its vanguard forces. If we do not recognise these different national permutations of the elements of world politics and world economy then they will take their revenge upon us. Thus British revolutionaries have recently had a signal lesson in this matter with the fiasco of the campaign against British membership of the EEC. The British workers' movement, having unceremoniously removed the government of Edward Heath and confronting an enfeebled and demoralised ruling class, seemed assured of victory in this campaign. Some in the leadership of the British section even forecast a political victory comparable with the Italian divorce referendum. In sociological terms the campaign over membership of the EEC could undoubtedly be presented as a class confrontation—Wilson and the right-wing labour leaders were exceptionally isolated within the organised workers' movement over this question. But such an understanding betrayed a gross misunderstanding of the political issues at stake and the political forces engaged: both the strength of chauvinism within the labour movement and the political appeal for the masses of the more advanced bourgeois solution.

### Complicating Factors

At the root of the complexity of the bourgeois social formations is the real separation between the economic and the political level which is one of the most characteristic features of the capitalist mode of production. Precapitalist forms of exploitation and oppression are based on the direct incorporation of physical coercion and constraint within the labour process. The slave-driver, the feudal lord with his retainers embody this fact. In advanced capitalism the organisers of the capitalist enterprise cease to directly carry out a function of physical coercion; this now devolves wholly upon the armed bodies of men on which the bourgeois state is based. The wage struggle of the direct producers thus has no absolutely necessary political dimension. Only at the level of the state and the political order are all social classes brought into relation with one another. The organisations and the

forms of consciousness born out of the struggle in the workplace are nevertheless the indispensable basis of all revolutionary politics because this is the arena where capitalism itself has assembled and organised the working class. But it is only by reaching out of the workplace and linking up in a revolutionary fashion with every oppressed and exploited group—on an international as well as national level—that the workers can hope to defeat the imperialist bourgeoisie. The orientations of the EPD are, of course, based on a rejection of the traditional forms of economism and spontaneism. But nevertheless a certain accommodation to these trends as they emerged in the mass upsurges after 1968 can be detected in the neglect of certain vital questions of the class struggle. Thus the original version of the EPD had virtually nothing to say about democratic demands, about the women's movement, about immigrant workers, about oppressed national minorities and nationalities, about the new petty bourgeoisie and middle strata or about the impact of international developments—especially those in Eastern Europe and the Third World. If comrades will re-read the list of omissions again, they will see that it amounts to a fairly comprehensive neglect of crucial questions. It is the hall-mark of any adaptation to spontaneism or economism that it will be silent on many of the questions that go to make up the crisis of the political order and help to constitute the revolutionary process. The amended draft of the EPD did go some way to rectifying the neglect of vital questions. Thus more account was taken of the women's movement and of the struggles of immigrant workers. In a document of this sort concerned with laying down a basic framework it would be unrealistic to expect a detailed treatment of even very important questions such as those we have indicated. But even the amended version of the EPD implicitly assumed that the new layers of the petty bourgeoisie and middle strata are more or less automatic allies of the working class. No doubt the experience of successful reactionary mobilisation of the old and new petty bourgeoisie in Chile and Portugal need not be repeated in the more advanced countries. But these experiences, combined with the debate between Maitan, Poulantzas, Vincent and others, should enable us to refine our understanding of this question and discover the demands and watchwords of struggle which will neutralise, or win over, these layers. Similarly on the question of Ireland there is a generic paragraph which simply does not mention any of the real complexities of the situation—notably the strength and social basis of loyalism. The impact of international events is wrapped up *in a single sentence* (see section 11 paragraph g). As we shall see later, the absence of any substantive reference to the deformed workers' states in Eastern Europe is probably linked to a schematic and inadequate conception of the development of the Stalinist parties.

If we consider the major political crises which have afflicted the European bourgeoisies, we will see that they frequently involve the type of "complicating factor" in the class struggle mentioned above. Nearly everywhere the progress of the mass struggle has been interrupted or accelerated by such factors. In Italy the mass upsurge of 1969-70 was followed by a political crisis for the ruling bourgeois party provoked by defeat in a referendum over divorce. A different type of democratic demand—defence of trade union rights—played an important role in the defeat of the Heath government. In West Germany a crisis over

Brandt's *Ostpolitik* disturbed the placid routines of the Bonn regime and even for a moment threatened the eruption of the masses into the crisis. In Portugal the dictatorship was eventually destroyed by its colonial wars and in Greece the military regime foundered in the wake of the Cyprus adventure. Throughout Europe, but especially in Spain and Britain, the question of the oppressed nationalities has been an explosive ingredient of the political system.

### The Question of Military Work

The lynch-pin of the bourgeois political order is, of course, its repressive apparatus. Allied to the general weakness of the analysis of the political level in the EPD is an inattention to the problems posed by the armed bodies of men commanded by the bourgeois state. Instead the EPD wishes away this problem too by invoking the immense potentialities of the mass struggle: ". . . the economic striking force of the proletariat in the advanced countries is so great, and the social basis of the bourgeoisie's power so narrow that in the event of a revolutionary upsurge involving the great majority of workers, the repressive apparatus can be partially paralysed at the outset." (Section 8, paragraph d). This statement may even turn out to be true, but since it is the sum total of what the EPD has to say about the problem of the repressive apparatus of the bourgeoisie, it allows all sorts of misconceptions and mistakes to go unchecked. Thus any underestimation of the repressive apparatus can breed either a spontaneism with regard to the technical preparation of armed insurrection or its converse—an adventurist or militarist confrontation with them. More generally, it leads to an underestimation of the role of agitation within the armed forces. The EPD did not reflect or anticipate the importance of military questions either for our sections or in the crisis of the bourgeois political order. A future perspectives document for Europe should seek to summarise the advanced experience of the French and Swedish sections in this field. It should also learn from the Portuguese experience the critical nature of developments within the armed forces. For a considerable time after April 1974 it was held that the comparative inexperience of the Portuguese masses would mean that the developments in Spain—where the experience of mass struggle had been more advanced—would dominate and command the events in Portugal. This approach both underestimated the political consciousness of the Portuguese masses—especially their deep attachment to their newly won democratic rights and forms of organization—and equally underestimated the consequences of the utter disarray inside the armed forces following the colonial wars, the overthrow of the dictatorship and the resulting popular upsurge. In the event it may well be Portugal that will be the key to Spain rather than vice versa.

### The Question of Dual Power

The Portuguese experience has also demonstrated the necessity of a much more concrete account of what we mean by institutions of dual power. Although the emergence of institutions of dual power was held to be the decisive development of the European class struggle for which we should plan, the EPD had little to say about the

conditions for a healthy and robust development of these dual power organs. The EPD declared that it was vital that once embryos of dual power had emerged they be extended and unified into a national system. The success or failure of embryonic institutions of dual power crucially depends on their ability to answer to the most immediate and pressing problems confronting the masses; both the problems of everyday life and the central problem of the counter-revolution. It is of course vitally important that the dual power organ is progressively based on *the widest mass involvement and self-organisation, that every current in the workers' movement should be able to advance its ideas within these bodies and that effective means exist for making and carrying out collective decisions*. The fact that both Stalinist and Social Democratic politics are a strong influence in the workers' movement in every European country makes a proper grasp of these conditions for the development of dual power particularly important. The Stalinist conception of such bodies as bureaucratic instruments to be manipulated by the Party leadership is, unfortunately, not confined to the Communist Parties but is also found among some organisations of the "far left" that have a recent Stalinist background. If a workers' commission or neighbourhood commission is being turned into the fief of one or another political group this will speedily disorient and demoralise the masses. On the other hand a recuperation of these bodies by a bourgeois democratic order will naturally take place unless they are increasingly armed with a revolutionary programme for mobilising the masses for their own independent class interests in an armed assault on the bourgeois state. There must be complete freedom for the organised political vanguard to assert itself within these bodies by winning the confidence of the masses they integrate. Again the classical writings on this question do not take us very far. Thus *State and Revolution* has nothing to say about the relation between workers' parties and the soviets. It also has little to say about how a growing proletarian power—based on workers' control, factory councils, soldiers' committees, etc.—actually federates together at local and national level in a systematic counterpower to that of the capitalist state. Recently we have called for a National Popular Assembly in Portugal. By themselves these words have no particular magic. We have not yet spelt out how it should be established, what relation it would have to the existing organs of popular power, in what way it would be answerable to the masses, the franchise it would be based on, the way in which it would assert its authority as a workers' state. What is needed is not utopian blueprints but realistic projections of the present potentialities of the Portuguese revolution. Moreover we should indicate very precisely the immediate burning needs of the masses to which the dual power organs correspond. As we know the masses do not establish dual power organs for their own sake but rather to accomplish specific and pressing tasks that cannot be carried out without such an instrument: this will typically include both measures to suppress the anarchy of the capitalist economy and to organise against counter-revolution. The development of the SUV in Portugal illustrates the way in which a genuinely autonomous mass movement develops in this way. Its demands embraced material demands of the rank and file soldiers (free travel to their homes, more adequate pay) as well as immediate

political demands relevant to the barracks (democratic rights for soldiers, expulsion of reactionary officers, soldiers' committees). This approach contrasted very sharply with the abstract rhetoric about popular power peddled by the ultra-lefts.

### The Actuality of the Revolution

If the incipient deviation in the EPD was to be identified it would probably be that of the Lukacs of the early twenties who launched the concept of the "actuality of the revolution" and who wrote *Lenin* and the "Question of Parliamentarism." It should be remembered that Lukacs certainly did not neglect the need for a revolutionary vanguard and favoured a thoroughgoing attack on both reformism and electoralism. But despite the brilliance of the Lukacs of this period he completely failed to identify the strategy and tactics that the revolutionary vanguard must adopt if it is to lead a socialist revolution in an advanced state with a regime of bourgeois democracy. The *actuality of the revolution* makes redundant any search for transitional demands or adoption of the tactics of the united front. "When the revolution is an actuality the old problem of whether it can be 'made' thus acquires a completely new meaning" (*Lenin*, p. 31). The most extreme expression of Lukacs's attitude to the problems presented by the bourgeois political order was the essay "The Question of Parliamentarism," where he declared: "where a workers' council (on however modest a scale) is possible, parliamentary work is redundant." In a critical note on this article Lenin wrote: "G.L.'s article . . . gives no concrete analysis of precise and definite historical situations; it takes no account of what is most essential (the need to take over and learn to take over all fields of the work and all institutions in which the bourgeoisie exerts its influence over the masses, etc.)". In *Left Wing Communism* Lenin identified both the universal lessons to be drawn from the experience of the Russian revolution and the particular tactics and strategy which revolutionaries would have to adopt to lead socialist revolutions in the advanced countries. Trotsky also addressed himself to these problems both in the twenties and in the thirties, in the process refining the tactics of the United Front and of the Transitional Programme.

The EPD had very little to say about electoral work as a means of developing the agitation, propaganda and organisation of our sections. Some sections have nevertheless had a relatively extensive experience of electoral intervention; notably the Swiss sections who participate in cantonal as well as national elections. The British section presented three candidates in the February 1974 election but this intervention was made with minimal preparation. The candidates, who had no connection with the working class movement in the areas for which they were standing, were announced less than four weeks before polling day. There had been no previous intervention in local elections to prepare the way for these candidatures. Clearly the opportunities of an electoral intervention are not going to be maximised by this type of approach. But in Britain in 1974 the main problem was the overall estimate of the prospects for the mass struggle in the context of the election. The fact that the miners remained on strike after the election had been called helped to secure a Labour

victory. But the momentum of the strike towards mass pickets and class confrontation was broken and the formation of a Labour government soon introduced a completely different overall political framework for the class struggle. At this point a precise understanding of the Labour Party and a sure grasp of the tactics to be adopted towards it became more necessary than ever before. The problems posed by the traditional workers' parties have in fact loomed large within each of the major political events in Europe in the past period: the development of the Union of the Left, the electoral victory of the Italian Communist Party, the unfolding of the Portuguese revolution.

### The Traditional Workers' Parties

The formulations in the EPD concerning the traditional workers' organisations are not very satisfactory. There are generalisations to the effect that the social democratic parties are being absorbed by the "state apparatus" and that the Communist Parties are undergoing a process of "social-democratisation." Both these statements are heavily qualified but the end result is that little of value is said about the nature and dynamic of these parties. No firm criteria are advanced for deciding when a given social democratic party has ceased to be a bourgeois workers' party, and equally no firm criteria are advanced for deciding when a Communist Party has become social democratic. In both these cases there seems to be a certain underestimation of the tenacity with which these traditional parties will pursue their traditional political project. The main tactic advanced towards these parties was that of unity in action and outflanking. Though this tactic was primarily directed at accumulating forces at the level of the extra-parliamentary struggle and was always to be combined with revolutionary attacks on reformism and electoralism, it nevertheless could lead to underestimating the obstacle represented by the traditional organisations. Underestimating these parties can take two apparently dissimilar forms. Firstly they can be verbally expelled from the workers' movement: thus the Portuguese Socialist Party or the SPD are declared to be bourgeois parties through and through, or the IMG leadership declares the Labour Party to be "organisationally dead" at its Spring 1973 conference. (And now finding that it is still alive executes a 180 degree turn which is equally incorrect.) The real influence which these parties are able to exercise within the working class is in no way reduced by such leftist rhetoric, as events have shown in each of these cases. Alternatively it can be thought that the rise of the mass struggle will effectively neutralise the leadership of these parties. Thus in the more recent period some comrades have been drawn to the view that the Portuguese CP or the British Labour Party are capable of being outflanked without any accompanying process of *confrontation*. If we re-read the EPD we will find some warnings against this sort of error (see notably section 9 entitled "The Inadequacies of the Subjective Factor") but also we will find that the impetuous rise of the mass struggle is able to disperse most problems revolutionaries face like mist on a summer's morning. Thus reformist and electoralist illusions will be dissipated as the mass struggle is extended and unified. But the illusions of the masses in reformism are not mere illusions, but have a powerful material base in the reforms that have actually been won. Abstract attacks by revolutionaries on reformism

can too easily seem like attacks on the reforms themselves, which represent historic gains for the working class. The fact that these reforms have been twisted to fit the logic of capitalist society and that they serve to attach the masses to bourgeois institutions in no way cancel out this fact. Revolutionaries clearly must defend all the historic gains of the workers' movement (democratic rights, social services, full employment, etc.). They should do this by advocating forms of mass organisation to defend these gains and should employ themes of mass agitation that challenge the reactionary content (e.g., reliance on the bourgeois state and on the bourgeois family). But above all revolutionaries must seek to defend the gains of the masses in very concrete and effective terms—this cannot be done without a combination of united fronts and confrontation with the traditional workers' parties, and without a combination of self-organisation of the masses and an intervention in the bourgeois political order, both at national and at local level. Transitional demands and a transitional programme are classically designed to defend the organisations and social conquests of the masses in a revolutionary fashion. Sometimes it will be possible to drag the traditional workers' parties into united fronts on these questions—and the attempt must always be made to reach the widest possible extent of united action. But equally it will invariably be the case that there are a whole range of questions on which an intransigent struggle against the traditional workers' organisations will be necessary. These will not be remote questions of revolutionary theory but burning problems facing the masses. For this reason we should have the consistent perspective of encouraging *class struggle currents* to develop in the trade unions around an Action Programme, comprising the *agitational aspects* of the Transitional Programme. To project *revolutionary tendencies* inside the trade unions as recommended in the EPD would be to neglect many invaluable opportunities for undermining the reactionary role of the trade union bureaucracies and their political allies. In the formulations of the EPD regarding economic class struggle there is an overriding emphasis on methods of struggle—elected strike committees, etc.—at the expense of a rounded out conception of the demands which are capable of sustaining these more advanced methods of struggle. An Action Programme should precisely relate transitional and democratic demands to the most burning immediate problems confronting the masses: inflation, unemployment, decay of the social services, moves towards strengthening the powers of the state, oppression of national minorities, etc. The possibility of developing an agitational platform of this kind and organising around it will vary from country to country—but however difficult this task may be, it remains an indispensable complement to more advanced methods of struggle.

### The Stalinist Jekyll and Hyde

The formulations in the EPD on the Communist parties are equally as indeterminate as those on the social democratic parties. The Communist parties throughout Europe are today subject to powerful contradictory forces which can only lead to acute tensions within them. Any process of social democratisation of these parties—and such

a process is a palpable reality—runs into powerful resistance from a number of sources. First there is the link with the Soviet bureaucracy which despite everything remains the crucial defining feature of these parties. The Soviet Union may propel these parties toward reformist politics but this still does not produce the wholesale identification with their “own” bourgeois state typically found in social democratic parties. Russian policy can also place great strain on the orientation of these parties towards the national bourgeois political arena as over Czechoslovakia and Portugal. In the EPD the crisis of Stalinism in Eastern Europe is referred to only in the context of the process of social democratisation of the Communist Parties—a process which according to the EPD is accelerated by such events as the invasion of Czechoslovakia. This is a one-sided conclusion since these events also helped to encourage the emergence of Brezhnevite currents which *in their own way* oppose the process of social democratisation. With the publication of the article by Zardov in *Pravda* for August 6, there has even been a tendency for the Russian bureaucracy to encourage a certain theoretical critique of the practice of the Western Communist Parties. It should also be recognised that the process of social democratisation also runs up against resistance from the domestic political traditions and political project of these parties. Though all these parties openly proclaim a peaceful, parliamentary road to socialism, there is certainly a layer of the membership, and even of the functionaries of these parties, that regard such programmatic declarations as a tactical manoeuvre designed to throw dust in the eyes of the bourgeoisie. Many of these parties have some direct experience with armed struggle against fascism and a layer within these parties has identified with the social revolutions in Cuba and Indochina. The rise of the class struggle and the need felt by the Party leadership to maintain its position within the workers' movement vis-a-vis both social democracy and the far left also act as a check on the process of social democratisation. Because of the Stalinist framework within which these differences emerge the “left” is not necessarily always more healthy than the “right.” The latter, for example, are frequently much more sensitive to questions of proletarian democracy—though, typically, they will fail to distinguish between this and bourgeois democracy. We are faced in fact with the familiar Jekyll and Hyde schizophrenia of Stalinism which can oscillate between the most abject class collaboration and putschist attempts to extend its own bureaucratic control. In united front initiatives directed at the Stalinist parties particular saliency must be given to the questions of the *political independence* of the workers' movement and to the question of *proletarian democracy* within the organisation of the struggle. This will be the best way of winning over the centrist currents which are likely to develop within these parties.

### Governmental Slogans

The traditional workers' parties undoubtedly constitute a gigantic obstacle to the making of socialist revolution in capitalist Europe. The birth of institutions of dual power may make this problem easier to tackle but, as Portugal has already shown, it will remain formidable nonetheless. Trotsky wrote about the problem represented by the large

reformist parties as follows: "In a developed capitalist society during a 'democratic' regime, the bourgeoisie leans for support primarily upon the working classes, which are held in check by the reformists. In its most finished form this finds expression in Britain during the administration of a Labour Government as well as during that of the Conservatives. . . . In the course of many decades, the workers have built up within bourgeois democracy by utilising it, by fighting against it, their own strongholds and bases of proletarian democracy: the trade unions, the political parties, the educational and sporting clubs, the co-operatives, etc. The proletariat cannot attain power within the formal limits of bourgeois democracy, but can do so only by taking the road of revolution: this has been proved by theory and by experience. And these bulwarks of workers' democracy within the bourgeois state are absolutely essential for taking the revolutionary road. The work of the Second International consisted in creating just such bulwarks during the epoch when it was still fulfilling its progressive historical labour." (*The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*, pp. 158-59). These formulations were applied by Trotsky to the Social Democratic parties but with certain modifications they could be extended to the Stalinist parties as well. We have already insisted that the tactic of the united front and agitation around transitional demands are the key to unlocking the anti-capitalist potential represented by these parties and the political and social conquests they have won in the past. But just as agitation within a bourgeois army will in the long run require the emergence of an alternative proletarian armed force if it is to be maximally effective so these tactics require the vigorous assertion of a pole of revolutionary politics. Revolutionists must aim to challenge and confront the traditional parties in every field. Agitation around an Action Programme in the mass organisations has already been mentioned. Challenging these parties on their home territory, the electoral plane, is also a crucial tactic since it enables a fully rounded out programme to be presented. We have already suggested that a very concrete and pertinent intervention in local politics could be a useful corrective to the propagandism and deadly abstraction that afflicts so much revolutionary politics.

Where this is possible our Governmental slogans should express the demand for a fighting unity with the traditional workers' organisations—embodying simultaneously a recognition of the importance of these organisations for the masses and a programmatic challenge to them. The crucial question here is the relative strength of the mass vanguard, especially of its proletarian component. But at least in Portugal, Spain, Italy, France and Britain the size of this vanguard is sufficiently large to warrant consistent propaganda for a workers' government in this sense. This slogan can quickly become agitational in a contest of mounting mass struggles and crises of the bourgeois political order. A governmental slogan which refers only to the traditional workers' parties sets undue and arbitrary limits on the further development of the class struggle. Such slogans can only encourage illusions in the traditional workers' parties. The slogans of a workers' government understood in a revolutionary sense, without any Zinovievite equivocations, demands the utmost political independence and combativity of the revolutionary organisation, as in all united front formulas. Thus Trotsky, writing on "A Workers' Government in France" in 1923, declared that within such a workers'

government the revolutionary Communist would have to "ceaselessly consolidate our political positions and our *organisation*, preserve our freedom of criticism with regard to our allies and weaken them by ceaselessly presenting new proposals that would break up the combination driving more and more of the right wing elements away." Trotsky was, of course, writing about the tactics of relatively large Communist parties. But the same basic principles should apply to the approach of today's revolutionary left to united front work and to the prospect of workers' governments. Moreover, as the EPD so correctly points out the task of our sections must be to hegemonise the mass vanguard that exists in most European capitalist states and use it as a lever within the united front.

The particular composition and structure of the workers' movement in the different countries varies considerably for reasons that have been referred to above. In this situation we badly need concrete studies of the variations involved such as was undertaken by Pierre Frank in his article in *Inprecor* on the Western Communist parties. In Britain the Labour Party continues to retain certain special features because of its unique relationship with a unified trade union movement. The far left in Britain can operate relatively freely in the trade unions and this gives it the illusion that it can dominate the Labour Party despite the fact that the Labour Party has always systematically excluded from direct membership the bulk of the proletarian vanguard. Revolutionaries should still maintain the right of all proletarian political tendencies to affiliate collectively to the Labour party on the terms set out by Lenin in *Left Wing Communism*. *But after the experience of six reformist governments it can no longer be an absolute rule that revolutionaries in Britain confine themselves to some variant of a Labour Government formula. The organisations to the left of the Labour party now comprise a number of active militants quite comparable with those inside the constituency Labour parties. Moreover the organisations to the left of Labour played at least as active a role in the great mass struggles which removed the Heath government as did these constituency parties.*

## The Concept of the "Far Left"

The nature of the organisations which inhabit the milieu of the mass vanguard must also be analysed very concretely. The concept of a "far left" as a generic category is losing efficacy and validity. Thus, for example, the Maoist organisations which have demonstrated the greatest resilience have often been those closest to the original Stalinist model. This seems to be particularly the case where the general level of the class struggle has been low—West Germany, Scandinavia, and, until April 1974, Portugal. Where Maoism is an influence rather than an organised dogma it has tended to be associated with ultra-leftism. Indeed the ultra-leftism of the "centrist" organisations of the "far left" was somewhat underestimated in the EPD and materials tributary upon it. These organisations preserve many of the deformations of Stalinism—especially with respect to questions of proletarian

democracy—since they are not based on a thorough-going critique of the programme and practice of Stalinism. This necessarily acts as a brake on the development of the class struggle and can powerfully antagonise important layers of the masses. In Portugal this phenomenon has appeared both in some of the Maoist organisations and in the militarism and commandism of the PRP. These are, of course, not just ideological deformations but can correspond to a real impatience of the mass vanguard—at times even a *chauvinism* of this vanguard towards the masses. Our goal of hegemonising the mass vanguard should never lead us to any accommodation with its political weaknesses—and these are many. Such an accommodation takes an organisational as well as a political toll. It leads to a hectic, hyper-active style of work, a grasshopper jumping from one campaign to another and a search for political short-cuts at the expense of the necessary programmatic clarity. Inevitably it undermines the political development of our cadre and leads to a casual and haphazard approach to political education and scientific research.

Since we have concluded with some very brief reflections on the dangers of accommodation to the mass vanguard, we must reiterate that, despite the manifest political immaturity of the mass vanguard and its attendant political vices, it remains *the crucially important layer* for the intervention of our sections. The great merit of the documents of the Ninth and Tenth World Congresses was that they insured that we should be in the right place and oriented to the right layer. Portugal has resoundingly vindicated the theses advanced on the mass vanguard and the prospect of the emergence of dual power organs. We have argued above that the *political content* of our orientation was not always adequate: though we were in the right place we were not always saying and doing all the right things. But this criticism hopefully should completely block the path to any backsliding in the direction of traditional programmatic fetishism and propagandism. Our programme must develop the struggle of the active layer already confronting the bourgeois order and not provide a hostile commentary upon it.

### Lack of Europe-wide campaigns

The crucial tasks of hegemonising the mass vanguard and confronting the traditional workers' organisations can be interpreted in a sectarian fashion, with an emphasis on the vindication and numerical growth of our own organisation. During a period of crisis such an approach completely misses the tremendous opportunities for regroupment of whole sections of the left arising out of the strains imposed on the traditional political formulas of social democracy, Stalinism and the various currents to their left. A successful policy of revolutionary regroupment and gains at the expense of the traditional workers' organisations demand initiatives on the crucial political questions thrown up by the crisis and an ability to back these up with appropriate forms of organisation and political analysis. In the sixties the International in Europe was transformed by its ability to play a leading role in understanding the significance of the Vietnamese revolution, the student revolt and the May events. This

great success was only possible because the political initiatives of the International were based on a vigorous and penetrating debate on the nature of Stalinism, on the character and significance of the Cuban revolution, on the contradictions of late capitalism and the potential of the youth revolt. Finally the International's experience of political organisation, of solidarity campaigns, of the ability to achieve joint action with non-Trotskyist political currents equipped us to make a qualitative organisational advance in the late sixties and early seventies. However aware we should be of the failings of the Trotskyist propaganda circles and entrust groups, we should never underestimate the strength of the political traditions they transmitted. The culmination of this period was probably the Red Europe rally and the demonstration to commemorate the Commune. Since that time the sections have grown numerically in some countries, sections have been established on a firm basis in new areas (Sweden, Portugal) and certain sections have continued to display a capacity for intervening in the decisive developments of the class struggle: notably the French section and more recently the LCI. But, despite significant advances, the European sections as a whole have not maintained the elan and coherence which they displayed until 1972. The central project of extending and unifying the mass struggle has failed to locate with sufficient precision the decisive developments in capitalist Europe. Even, or perhaps especially, in countries like Italy and Britain where the mass struggle has had a direct impact on the bourgeois political order, the sections have not been able to use the theses of the EPD as a springboard for a successful national political intervention. (In the document, "The Winter Crisis and the IMG," we have tried to analyse the reasons for this, in the British case during the crucial 1973-4 period). But perhaps the biggest disappointment in the recent period has been the rather slow and uncertain reaction to the development of the Portuguese revolution, with few significant initiatives co-ordinating the activities of all the European sections.

The existence of *Inprecor* should make the task of such co-ordination much easier than it ever was in the past. In the English-speaking world the public debate of the IMT with the LTF on Vietnam and Portugal has probably had a largely positive effect—which is not to condone the way the LTF have used *I.P.* [*Intercontinental Press*]. This open debate on the decisive question of world politics has had a great impact on the vanguard and the march of events has helped to adjudicate the relative merits of the different positions. However much work remains to be done in developing an analysis and balance sheet of the developments in Portugal and of their lessons for the revolutionary movement elsewhere, especially in Europe. It will also be necessary to convince the mass vanguard that our sections embody the qualities which the social revolution in the advanced countries will demand: proletarian democracy, a model of Leninist organisation that has no nostalgia for monolithism and commandism, a revolutionary practice that knows how to draw on the best in Marxist science and culture. The ability of our sections to attract and lead advanced workers will depend on their success in demonstrating such qualities in practice.

## Some conclusions

These notes have sought to identify problems rather than to specify solutions. Here we will tentatively indicate some of the conclusions that are implied by the preceding critique.

The obstacle presented by the traditional workers' parties demands different tactics depending on the relative weight of these parties in the workers' movement, on their proximity to Government and on their political origins. The large Governmental social-democratic parties of Britain, Sweden, West Germany and Austria are top-heavy labour bureaucracies which the masses see as defending certain historic gains they have made; but they do not any longer see in these parties any promise of a fundamental change in society. The parliamentary representation of these parties is remote from their mass base, and political organisation at the point of production is almost non-existent. The tactical prescription of 'unity in action and outflanking' thus has very little purchase in the case of these parties: it can be applied on some international questions (Chile, Spain, but not Portugal) and in cases where the bourgeois parties threaten a parliamentary coup against the Government. But on most of the central questions of the class struggle there is no prospect of establishing any kind of united action with the social democratic party—despite its many special features, the British Labour party is essentially a party of this type. As the capitalist crisis erodes full employment, the social services and wage levels, the social democratic parties become vulnerable to united action initiatives from below aimed at defending and extending democratic rights, past social conquests and immediate material interests of the masses. The challenge from below need in no way respect the given political form of the workers' movement—the large social democratic parties invariably exclude the most active and advanced workers from effective membership and this is why they can act as a straight-jacket upon the working masses. At the same time, every effort should be made to unite with the combative workers at the base of the parties around class-wide demands, embodied in an action programme.

The tactics to be adopted towards the non-Governmental parties are necessarily different. In most cases these parties do still represent for the masses some hope of a fundamental transformation of society, and in the case of the Stalinist parties they do still display some capacity to organise at the point of production. Even if the large Stalinist parties enter the arena of Government in the coming period, they will remain for a time the focus of popular hopes; a significant electoral advance by the French or Italian CPs would almost certainly be linked to a development of the extra-parliamentary mass struggle. A Governmental manoeuvre by the Spanish CP would not have the same significance but is still not likely to be capable of dampening or containing the mass movement in the context of the crumbling dictatorship. At all events the assumption of Governmental functions by the Communist Parties anywhere in Europe is unlikely to have the effective of leading to an immediate decline in the level of the mass struggle as was the case following the formation of the Wilson government in Britain in February 1974. The

smaller CPs often still retain an influence on a certain layer of combative workers and often function not so differently from the more right-wing centrist groups of the past. The tactical prescription 'initiative—unity in action—outflanking' retains its validity in the case of these parties, even though it must always be accompanied by programmatic confrontation focusing on the crucial questions of the political independence of the workers' movement and the necessity of proletarian democracy as a component of today's struggles and not only as a characteristic of the future socialist society.

In our analysis of each social formation we should take the greatest care to establish the national specificity of political institutions, of economic development and of class forces. Each social formation represents an original combination which cannot be reduced to the pure logic of capitalism as a mode of production; indeed a proper understanding of the capitalist mode of production demonstrates the necessity of the existence of a relatively autonomous political order. Thus the course of the class struggle in the crumbling Spanish dictatorship, with its economic crisis, acute national tensions and special political traditions will differ sharply from the pattern of events which are likely to unfold in France, with its relatively advanced social formation and economy and extensive experience of bourgeois democracy. Equally the fate of the social-democratic Government in Britain is likely to differ greatly from that in Sweden, given the acute discrepancy in the strength of the capitalist economy and the size of the layer of combative workers. We should also pay attention to the differential impact that international developments will have in the various countries of capitalist Europe. A crisis of the Stalinist regime in East Germany would have a quite different—although still very great—impact in West Germany and Italy. Clearly the gamut of variations cannot be explored here, but we have nevertheless sought to identify some of the most crucial variables: level and type of economic development, relationship to the capitalist world market and to the non-capitalist economies, nature of the political system, deployment of bourgeois political forces, organisation of the armed force, police and para-military formations, relationship of forces within the workers' movement between reformism, Stalinism, Mao-Stalinism, ultra-leftism, etc., relationship of the traditional workers' organisations to the government, level of unionisation, organisation of unions, composition of the workforce (including proportion of women, immigrants, etc.), size of service sector, scope of Government economic activities, extent of home ownership and extent of development of hire purchase, credit, financing and organisation of health, education, etc. Within each state, we should also naturally study regional variations, degree of national integration and so forth. Developing such a detailed picture of each national combination must seem unduly laborious and time-wasting—in fact, of course, failure to identify the specific field of revolutionary practice in this way will lead to an incomparably greater loss of the time and labour of our militants.

It follows from the above that the democratic and transitional demands which we project must be extended and developed to provide the most suitable terrain on which to confront the traditional workers' parties. We should seek to equip the mass vanguard with a *global*

*programmatic alternative* to social democracy and Stalinism. Our revolutionary programme must not be a thin echo of the Bolshevik programme of 1917, but must be based on an understanding of *all* the contradictions of an advanced capitalist society.

The combination of bourgeois democracy with moves towards strengthening the repressive powers of the state creates conditions in which agitation for democratic rights for soldiers and the disbanding of all the special repressive instruments of the bourgeois state can acquire great mass resonance. Across a wide front radical democratic demands can play a crucial role in forging a fighting alliance of all oppressed and exploited; especially demands relating to women, immigrants and oppressed nationalities. Full support for the right to national self-determination must involve no accommodation to nationalist ideology: in the case of nationalities that are not oppressed, our support for the *right* of self-determination should not be accompanied by advocacy of it (e.g., Scotland). The demands developed within the women's liberation movement can vitally enrich the traditional socialist demands relating to women's oppression (e.g., the demand for "Free Abortion on Demand" or for universally available creche facilities lead directly into the nature of the social services). The defence and extension of trade union rights (including for immigrant and women workers) will be of special importance. Especially in sectors where unionisation is low, we should always seek to extend union organisation and not confine ourselves to calls for elected strike committees. Democratic rights in the workplace, coupled with workers' control initiatives, incipiently challenge the bourgeois limitations with which democracy is hedged around in capitalist society. The necessity of workers' self-defence can emerge even from struggles that have an essentially democratic content. However, this is not to say that defence of democratic rights should not be accompanied by a full transitional programme.

In addition to the classical transitional demands for a sliding scale of wages and hours, we should demand a sliding scale of social benefits and social expenditure. The crisis of social expenditure requires from revolutionaries a qualitative as well as quantitative series of demands. It presents excellent opportunities for linking up the struggles of workers in the social sector with initiatives directed at the working class as a whole, since its 'social wage' is here at stake.

The development of late capitalism has typically led to a proliferation of economic mechanisms for tying the 'middle sectors' and the better paid sectors of the working class to the fortunes of the capitalist economy: notably a growth of mortgaged home ownership and the spread of hire purchase agreements. We should demand a moratorium on all hire purchase agreements and mortgages below

a certain figure. The discussion of the middle sectors generally suggests that they are integrated by socialised forces of production in contrast to the traditional petty bourgeoisie. We should seek to remove or reverse those mechanisms that give them a stake in capitalist society. Worker control initiatives and qualitative demands in the workplace are also likely to play an important role in drawing the middle sectors to the side of the working class.

The above are just a very few of the demands we should be exploring. The most burning problems facing the masses should be met by an Action Programme comprising the immediately agitational demands of the Transitional Programme and proposing a working class solution to the capitalist crisis. Such an Action Programme should become the basis for class struggle currents within the trade unions. The full transitional programme should be systematically presented in the bourgeois electoral arena. We should understand that elections are usually an excellent opportunity for agitation and organisation as well as for the development of the mass struggle and to the everyday problems of the masses. Approached in the right way, they provide an indispensable opportunity for programmatic contestation of the traditional workers' parties—both of their immediate proposals and of their model of socialism.

## Resumé

The points we have tried to make in these critical notes on the EPD could be summarised as follows. Firstly, the EPD tends to underestimate and oversimplify the problems posed by, and at, *the political level* of the bourgeois order—the specificity of national conjunctures, the role of the recuperative mechanisms of bourgeois democracy, and the complexity of the social formation. Secondly, and as a consequence, the EPD underplays the role of *the subjective factor*: the need for revolutionary work in many different fields (including the armed forces and the bourgeois electoral arena at every level), the need to spell out more concretely our understanding of how soviets could develop and should function, the need to arm the mass struggle with transitional demands and a transitional programme. The "objectivist" faith in the "actuality of the revolution" centrally involves a failure to grapple adequately with the obstacle represented by the traditional workers' organisations in Europe and the tactics needed to remove or neutralise this obstacle. Finally the above inadequacies lead to indulgence towards the political vagaries and deformations of many "far left" and "centrist" currents and an insufficient attention to ensuring that our own sections really embody and project the qualities that a socialist revolution in an advanced country will demand.

# ON THE INTERNATIONAL

by Sakai

## I.

1. How should the evolution of the International from 1968 to 1974 be characterized?

The main features of the evolution of the International since 1968 can be summarized in three points, as follows: a) the spontaneist and empiricist growth and expansion of the International based on the new international youth radicalization; b) the grave failure of the Ninth World Congress line on the Latin American revolution with its disastrous organizational effects upon the International in Latin America; c) the formation of international tendencies and factions with the aggravation of the internal faction fights and polarization of the International.

2. The fast growth and expansion the International achieved was based on the new international youth radicalization in a deeply spontaneist and empirical way without a uniform political and organizational leadership of the International. This resulted in the uneven development of the International politically and organizationally. The biggest unevenness in the growth and expansion of the International is most evident in the incredible decomposition of the Indian Trotskyist movement and the vacuum of Trotskyism in Southeast Asia. Even in Western Europe we can see serious unevenness among the successful breakthroughs, such as the grave failure in Italy and the unbelievable West German non-intervention into the real explosion of SDS [Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund—German Socialist Student Federation].

We can see the political unevenness in the difference between the pacifist antiwar intervention in the U.S. and the West European anti-imperialist Vietnam solidarity orientation. The process of growth and expansion of the International was not the direct result of a consistent and systematic political and organizational intervention by the International through its international leadership but rather the result of the spontaneist and empirical thrust of sectors of radicalizing youth to the International. In any case, the International has succeeded in renewing its ranks internationally and in expanding numerically and geographically since 1968. Now almost all the sections and sympathizing groups are under the leadership of the new generation; the renewal of the International has been accomplished at the leadership level of the sections and sympathizing groups since 1968. This renewal of the International is the historic gain of the last seven years.

However, because of the specific spontaneist and empiricist nature of the fresh growth, the International is characterized by the following major features: the lack of a strong centralized international leadership which can represent the new generation of young cadres; the lack of a deep political homogeneity among the new international cadres; and the great geographical unevenness in the

growth and expansion of the International, to be seen, first of all, in the decomposing situation of the Indian section and the vacuum of Trotskyism in Southeast Asia.

3. The second important feature is the grave error of the Ninth World Congress on the question of the Latin American revolution and its disastrous organizational results in the region. The extremely difficult organizational situation of the International in the Latin American world is reflected in the following two facts: First, the Argentine political situation is highly explosive due to the consistent trend of the working class offensive since the late 1960s and it is quite possible to have a nation-wide dual power situation with a deeper explosion of the Argentine working class in the not too distant future. This will surely result in profoundly influencing the future course of the continental political situation. But the International has no reliable organization with some minimal organizational stability and political capacity that can intervene in the actual development of the class struggle there. There is the PST, but it has shown a strong right-wing deviation since the late 1960s. The International is really paralyzed in Argentina. Second, the International has no "pivotal" sections that can take systematic initiatives for developing international coordination among the sections and sympathizing groups on a Latin American scale. Though the International has the PST, the problem is the same as in Argentina. The International is also paralyzed as an International on the continental scale in Latin America.

Such an extremely difficult situation of the International in Latin America is the precise result of the grave error of the Ninth World Congress on the Latin American revolution—that is, the line of prolonged rural guerrilla warfare (see the Japanese position paper on the Latin American question).

4. The third important feature is the formation of the International Majority Tendency and the Leninist Trotskyist Faction and the aggravation of the internal faction fight with the crystallized polarization within the International.

Organizations of the International have split along the political differentiation of the international majority and the international minority in Mexico, Canada, Australia and Spain. For more than a year before the Tenth World Congress the international faction fight was aggravated even organizationally and most of the energy of the International in connection with its international work had been absorbed by the internal faction fight. The external international activity in the United Secretariat had been paralyzed. Even now the international faction fight is a big burden upon the international leadership in extending its external international activities.

The formation of the IMT and the LTT (later the LTF)

and the aggravation of the faction fight since the end of 1972 is, in a sense, an inevitable political result of the fast and extremely spontaneist growth and expansion of the International since 1968. In its political content this international faction fight has an aspect of historical continuity with the split of 1953 between the International Secretariat and the International Committee. On the other hand, a spontaneism of the new young cadres on the organizational question and the wrong orientation of the international majority on the Latin American revolution played negative roles in aggravating the international faction fight organizationally.

However, in the International which has had an influx of the new generation, the core of the differences has been deeply political. The international majority has represented the aggressive or active nature of the new cadres that reflects the explosion of radical militancy, triggered by the Tet offensive of 1968, among students and young workers all over the world, and it has also represented an internationalist tendency which tries even in their empiricism to respond to the question of power, which is posed by the actual development of the international class struggle. As for the international minority, it has been represented by the block of the SWP of the U.S. and the PST of Argentina. The SWP has represented the political level of the radicalization of the white masses that developed in the general framework of pacifism through the antiwar movement in the USA; therefore it is a rather national political tendency which does not yet pose the question of power in its actual practice in the mass movement. On the other hand, the PST of Argentina is another national political tendency which can be characterized as a specific opportunism that tail-ends this or that tactical opportunity from time to time and has mainly oriented itself to the opening of a quasi-parliamentary situation. Thus the SWP-PST's position, that evades the question of power in the actual class struggle, has clashed politically with the internationalist tendency of the international majority which tries to respond actively to the question of power in its practice. Therefore the deepening of the international faction fight was inevitable in the International and the international faction fight has posed the fundamental question: that is, on what political basis the International is to be built as a genuine communist international organization under a single and united international leadership.

## II.

5. Now the crisis and decline of the international imperialist hegemony of the USA is clear enough; the global balance of forces between the world-revolutionary forces as a whole, which include the workers states of the USSR and China, and the counterrevolutionary forces around U.S. imperialism has clearly become favorable for the former. This new international situation has been created by the breakthrough of the Vietnamese revolution, and this new international balance of forces poses new international perspectives for class struggles and antibureaucratic struggles all over the world. Now the international class struggle has entered a new epoch where it must fight for achieving the total victory of the world revolution. At the same time the international class struggle is now increasingly posing the question of power in more and

more countries. After the victory of the Vietnamese revolution, now the struggle for power is posed to the Thai proletariat, that is, how to accomplish the Indochinese revolution in the coming period. In the region of the Philippines, Malaysia-Singapore and Indonesia, the Marcos regime is far from a stable situation. A situation for open proletarian struggle for power is coming closer and closer in South Korea and Japan. Now in Western Europe we have the Portuguese situation and next we will have a Spanish explosion. In Italy the traditional bourgeois governmental forms around the Christian Democratic party are now in a final crisis and in France we have a critical balance of forces between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The coming explosion of the Spanish proletariat will very strongly influence the situation in Portugal, France and Italy. We have the unstable Greek situation.

Thus we can say that the proletarian struggle for power is posed or is going to be posed directly in the Mediterranean countries. As for the Arab world, the not too distant emergence of the Egyptian proletariat against the Sadat regime will mark a deep change in the character of the Middle East political situation; the Egyptian working class will become the backbone of a new proletarian permanent revolution in the Arab lands. In India the nature of the situation is all too clear; the question is purely one of leadership. The Indian proletarian struggle should provide the backbone for the subcontinental struggle for power. The nature of the Latin American situation is also clear enough; there has been the Chile coup d'etat and we have the current Argentine situation. Therefore the only remaining question in the capitalist world is the problem of North America. Even for North America, if we are loyal to Trotsky on the question of U.S. imperialism, there will not be a long intermediate period before we will face the very same question of the proletarian struggle for power in North America.

The crisis and decline of the international hegemony of U.S. imperialism and the revival of the struggle for power in Western Europe and East Asia will give the antibureaucratic struggle in the USSR, the East European countries and China new anti-imperialist international perspectives for their political revolutions.

6. Thus it is very clear that the International faces the tasks of building the revolutionary parties which can intervene in the actual struggles for power and of building a strong Communist International which will centralize the national revolutionary parties as a single international communist organization. Therefore it is an absolute necessity to start a determined struggle to overcome the spontaneist and empiricist nature of the International since 1968, to overcome the crisis of our Latin American movement, and to give the utmost political clarification to the present international faction fight and overcome it.

Now the International faces two levels of its practical problems and tasks, political and organizational, which it must solve in the present period.

## III.

### 7. Political Problems and Tasks—I.

First of all, the International must clarify the nature of the LTF political lines. The core of the LTF political

orientation is a systematic evasion of the question of power in the present situation of the class struggle. The propagandistic method of party building by the LTF leadership of the SWP is closely related with its argument for consistent nationalism and democracy in general in the epoch of decaying imperialism; that is, of building a mass party through consistent mass campaigns along the line of nationalism and democracy. But the key link which is lacking in the argument of the LTF leadership of the SWP is the question of proletarian struggle for state power and the proletarian dictatorship. The essence of the theory of permanent revolution is that the unsolved democratic and national tasks can be solved only through the proletarian struggle for its dictatorship as part of the internationalist socialist revolution in the epoch of decaying imperialism. This is also the essence of the famous April thesis by Lenin in 1917. The LTF leadership of the SWP has turned this theory of the permanent revolution upside down. The result is an automatist theory of a new type of the consistent nationalist and democratic road to a socialist revolution or a road to the socialist revolution through a consistent nationalist and democratic mobilization of the masses. The proletarian struggle for its dictatorship poses the question of property relations and the question of power which are fundamentally class questions and our party building is only possible if it is based on a clear political program for the proletarian dictatorship and through actually preparing ourselves for an open struggle for power or actual intervention into the proletarian struggle for power. So we must characterize the SWP leadership argument for the LTF on consistent nationalism and democracy and its propagandist method of party building as a system of theory that evades the question of power for the proletariat in the present situation of class struggle in a consistent way.

And now the actual development of the international class struggle poses the very question of power in various degrees, of course, in more and more countries all over the world. Under such a situation of the international class struggle, a consistent evasion of the question of power is not simply a "neutral" position but a Menchevist position in the actual class struggle. That is the iron logic of class struggle. Thus, since the LTF continues to evade the question of power under the present tendency of the international class struggle, our difference with the LTF becomes a fundamental political difference between the International and the LTF. The question which the LTF is now posing is the life or death question for the International.

Now the real nature of the LTF political line should be clarified as fully as possible so as not to allow any illusion on that point and the International should make its determination to fight against the Menchevist LTF line in the International. This is the foremost task of the International at the present stage.

There is also a grave revisionist tendency in the arguments of the LTF leadership of the SWP on the question of the workers states and Stalinism and on the nature of the post world war II development of the world situation and the international class struggle, but I will not take up those questions here.

## 8. Political Problems and Tasks—II

Secondly, it is now an absolute necessity for the

International to draw an *honest* and crystal-clear balance sheet on the Latin American line of the 9th World Congress, to initiate a systematic and consistent effort to overcome its present extremely difficult situation in Latin America. The International must elaborate a solid political base on which its Latin American sections and sympathizing organizations can start their region-wide international coordination to build the Latin American movement of the International in a systematic and consistent way.

## 9. Political Problems and Tasks—III

The present Portuguese intervention by the International and the present Portuguese debate in the International are extremely important at the present stage of the International, not only because the Portuguese question is at the center of the internal political struggle, but also because the Portuguese situation poses the problem of political strategy and tactics, such as the governmental slogan, united front policy, problems of the proletarian alliance with other oppressed classes and layers, and problems of the dual power situation and its organizations among the masses. Almost all of these problems have been solved *theoretically* in the tradition of the first five years of the Comintern and, after that, Trotsky's contributions to the international class struggle. But for us, the new generation of international cadres, these problems are new in our actual experience and we must learn the theories from tradition and learn to apply them in practice to our own actual experiences. This is an essential part of the rebuilding process of the Communist International among the world-wide new vanguard which lacks any historical memory of the traditions.

Now the International more and more faces the question of actual proletarian struggle for state power and its problems of political strategy and tactics in the Mediterranean countries of Europe, East Asia, Latin America, the Indian subcontinent and the Arab world. The International now faces the fundamental political problems of the proletariat in its struggle for state power. The International is entering or has entered a new stage in its political tasks. When we see the 10th World Congress theses on capitalist Europe, the nature of the document is very clear; that is, the document aims to give a general guideline for building *revolutionary organizations in a precise situation* where there are *potentials* of prerevolutionary or revolutionary explosions and there are layers of radical elements which are spontaneously politically independent from the traditional reformist leaderships of the working class, *but where there is no open prerevolutionary or revolutionary situation*. The nature of the document is very precise, to build a nationwide political organization of Trotskyists (the "revolutionary organization") in the actual mass movement, based on the radical elements of a "mass proportion" which are spontaneously independent from the traditional reformist workers' parties (that is, the "new mass vanguard,"), and before a prerevolutionary or revolutionary explosion of the situation. But when this document was adopted at the last world congress it had already been outdated in the actual situation of Italy and France at least. Then we had the explosion of the Portuguese situation in 1974. When the document was originally drafted it was outdated in respect to the actual nature of the Italian political situation, because the Italian situation was far more advanced in its bourgeois political

crisis than the French situation at that same period. The burning political problems of united front politics, the governmental slogans, the question of the dual power situation and its organizations were extremely vital for Italy at that time. It was absolutely impossible to "outflank" those real political problems in order to build "an Italian revolutionary organization." In Italy the question of party building has been posed in direct relation with the political problems of the proletariat in its actual struggle for state power. Thus the West European document has not been able to serve as the answer to our Italian question which was far more advanced. As for the critical remarks of the Japanese section on this document, see "On 'The Building of Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe'" by the Japan Revolutionary Communist League, Japanese section of the Fourth International, SWP Internal Information Bulletin, January 1975, No. 2 in 1975.

In any case, the explosion of the Portuguese situation has definitely opened a new stage of the class struggle in capitalist Europe. The West European sections should be tested and politically rearmed on a qualitatively higher level through the Portuguese struggle and the coming explosion of the Spanish situation. This fact means that the International has to respond to the real problems of the proletarian struggle for state power in its day to day activities, and we are facing the very same question in East Asia, especially after the fall of Saigon. Now the International must relearn the Bolshevik Leninist theories on this question and learn to apply those theories in its actual practice. This is the new stage in the development of our International and the International must work for a political homogenization of the new cadres of the International on this key political question which is a decisive part of the International's task of overcoming the past spontaneism in growth in expansion.

#### 10. Political Problems and Tasks—IV.

The crisis and decline of the international hegemony of the U.S. and the new rise of international class struggle pose the question of the international perspective of the proletarian revolution. Now the International must start to discuss the aspect of the international perspectives of proletarian revolution. The International perspectives of proletarian revolution are the real political base on which the International can build its international centralization of the national sections and sympathizing organizations. We reject any kind of federalist concept of the International, and we stand for a genuine *political* centralization of the International based on the international perspectives of proletarian revolution. The world revolution is a single and historic organic unity, and each region of the world has its own specific organic and historic unity as a part of the total unity of world revolution. Therefore the International should be a single and centralized Communist international organization based on its single international perspective of world revolution. And it should have its regional international leadership based on the regional international perspective of proletarian revolution in each region.

Therefore the discussion and elaboration of our international perspective proceeds on two levels: The single

perspective of proletarian revolution on a world scale (the world political program of the International) and the regional international perspective of proletarian revolution (the regional international program). In regard to the perspective of proletarian revolution on a world scale, the International must work to elaborate the political balance sheet document on the evolution of the world situation and the international class struggle since the beginning of the Second World War. The International should have its balance sheet discussion on the Second World Congress of 1948, the Third World Congress of 1951 and the Unification Congress of 1963, and the nature of the present stage of the world situation and its perspectives. As for the regional international perspectives, our young Arab movement has the first draft thesis on the Arabian revolution and we, the East Asians, are working to elaborate the East Asian perspective for proletarian revolution. But now in Europe we have a very strange phenomenon. The West European document has posed our actual preparation for the proletarian struggle for state power, and the Mediterranean sections and sympathizing organizations are now in the very situation where the question of power is our real political problem. But there is no first draft thesis of the regional international perspective of proletarian revolution for all of Europe (East and West, of course!). Just to repeat, the "Red Europe" slogan is our international perspective in Europe. But is the "Red Europe" a "red socialist Common Market" or a proletarian unification of East and West Europe? How can the International even fight for a proletarian revolution in some of the capitalist European countries without having an all-European-scale and regional international program of proletarian revolution? In this context, our West European movement is even now deeply empiricist and spontaneist. We must ask: What is the basis of the actual international unity of our West European sections and sympathizing organizations in Europe. In this same context, the method of our new Arab movement with its first Arab draft thesis is really internationalist and far freer of the West European type of national empiricism and spontaneism. In North America the Quebec comrades have begun to discuss the problem of the "Red North America" perspective.

The International must initiate determined efforts to overcome this spontaneism and empiricism on the question of the international perspective of proletarian revolution through which the International will be able to develop the political homogenization of the new international cadres, that is, a political centralization process of its sections and sympathizing organizations.

11. The International can develop and deepen the political homogenization and political centralization of its international ranks only through a determined effort to solve all these four political problems and tasks at the present stage in the evolution of the International. We are just at the very first stage of international building.

#### IV.

#### 12. Organizational Problems and Tasks—I.

First of all, how should we think about building the International as a real international communist organiza-

tion and its international leadership? This is the fundamental organization question for the present International, on which we must have a clear and precise idea in order to overcome the spontaneism and empiricism characterizing the international organizational question since 1968.

The international leadership which we must work to build in the coming period should be composed of the cadres who can represent actual movements of the International in the regions of Western Europe and Eastern Europe, the Arab world, Black Africa, the Indian subcontinent, East Asia, North America and Latin America. Therefore, *the building of a real international leadership is a whole process of building the International itself all over the world, overcoming the present political, organizational and geographical unevenness of the International.* There are two levels to the problem in this context of building a real international leadership. These are: *a) to develop a regional scale international coordination and its regional international leaderships in each region where the International already has its movement. b) to overcome the geographical unevenness of the International, especially in the Arab-Asian belt from the Arab world to East Asia, Eastern Europe and Black Africa.* Now the cadres of the new generation operate at the level of national leadership of the sections and sympathizing organizations. In general, these new cadres of the International are just building their national leadership in each section or sympathizing organization, and they have not had real experiences on the level of international organizational work. The International must create *a layer of its international cadres* which can form and fill the single international leadership of the International as a whole as well as the regional international leadership of each regional international movement. It is absolutely impossible for a single international leadership to follow and intervene in the activities of all the national sections and sympathizing organizations directly, effectively, and permanently. Only the intermediate regional-scale international leadership, which works for regional coordination based on the regional international perspective of proletarian revolution, can follow the activities of the national sections and sympathizing organizations in the region more or less on a day-to-day basis, and the single international leadership can intervene in the activities of the national section and sympathizing organizations through such regional-scale international leaderships. In this organizational aspect international building means to build both the single international leadership and the regional international leadership and, at the same time, it means that *each national section must be built as a part of the regional international movement of the international in its region from the very beginning.* Therefore the present prospect of building leaderships on the national level must definitely be combined with the *simultaneous* development of the regional-scale international coordination and the building of the regional international leadership in each region; that is, *the building of section level leaderships must be regionalized directly or, the building of section level leaderships must be a directly regional international work.* The building of the section-leadership must be truly internationalist from the very beginning in each region. It is thereby a process of building regional-scale international leaderships simultaneously and the combined process is to

create a layer of international cadres for the International. Building the international leadership is not merely to gather some individual cadres into the body of the leadership but it is essentially to build the national sections and their leadership in a genuine internationalist way. This is the real and organic base of the International and its international leadership. As for the equally important task of overcoming the geographical unevenness of the International in building the International and its international leadership, the need is now clear enough. While it is vital to realize the regional-scale internationalization where we have regional-wide movements, such as in Western Europe, North America and Latin America, it is also vital for the building of the International and its international leadership to overcome the geographical unevenness of the International in the belt area from the Arab world to East Asia, Eastern Europe and Black Africa.

*Now our central organizational weakness is in India.* The Latin-American situation of the International is grave and extremely difficult. Yet we have the sections and sympathizing organizations even if they have problems and difficulties. Our Latin American difficulty is essentially political as the precise result of the wrong line of the 9th World Congress. We have some serious initial activities in Eastern Europe, the Arab world and East Asia but, in the Indian subcontinental area, our Ceylonese section, which has positive energy and real possibilities in the country, is isolated in the region, and our Indian situation is just a shame for the International. We witness a decomposition of the Indian section of the 4th International, the Communist League of India while the present Indian situation is nearing the final crisis of the Indian Congress regime of the national bourgeoisie since its independence in 1947 and there is a huge potential of explosive class struggle in India. This Indian class struggle is the real backbone of the proletarian revolution on the Indian subcontinent which has to build a real unity of workers and peasants on the subcontinental scale, breaking up the divisions instituted by the neocolonialist ruling classes in the region. Now it is an absolute necessity for the International to make a real initial start in rebuilding its *Indian movement.*

In any case, overcoming the geographical unevenness of the International is an essential part of building the international leadership and the International itself. Clearly, it is no solution to pick up come "capable" individual cadres and put them in the body of the international leadership without their regional bases. Those cadres should be able to represent their regional movements and they must be able to play international roles on the body of the international leadership in relation with the regional movement.

To build the international leadership and the International itself through the realization of regional-scale international coordination and formation of the regional international leadership in each region and through overcoming the geographical unevenness of the International in the belt from the Arab world to East Asia, Eastern Europe and Black Africa—this must be the general organizational orientation of our international.

### 13. Organizational Problems and Tasks—II.

Since the last world congress an important step has been taken to build a permanent political center of the international leadership with several fulltime cadres and the regular publication of *Imprecor*, the fortnightly organ of the United Secretariat. This formation of the permanent political center of the international leadership and the publication of *Imprecor* have a historic importance in building the International and its working leadership. This important step has been taken on the basis of the past growth and expansion of the International and is also an important international action, politically and organizationally, to try to overcome the last traces of spontaneity and empiricism of growth and expansion tied up with the political, organizational, and geographical unevenness in the International. However, this step is an *initial* action in order to build a real international leadership and its permanent political center.

What should be the fundamental role of the international leadership at the present stage? This statement of ours has pointed out the four political problems and tasks in the sections from 7 to 10 and the two fundamental organizational tasks of the regional internationalization and the overcoming of the geographical unevenness of the International in section 12. The role of the international leadership is to take real international initiatives to solve these political and organizational problems and tasks in the present period. Of course, this includes following the important developments in the world political situation and the international class struggle, giving clear class positions to these developments, helping the regional movements and the sections and sympathizing organizations to intervene in the important and decisive developments of the class struggle, organizing international campaigns, and so on. Our international leadership must conduct its normal day-to-day functioning, that is clear. *But we should be much more precise about the fundamental political and organizational tasks of the International leadership, which are very specific according to the nature of the present evolution of the International. Otherwise, our present even-now-weak and extremely precious international leadership will be all too easily absorbed and spontaneously swallowed up by the actual developments of the international class struggle and the internal evolution of the International.*

Now the International has its region wide movements in Western Europe, North America and Latin America. But the Latin American movement is not strong because of the political crisis of the movement. Therefore the West European and North American movements are the only ones which have some minimal organizational capacity and possibility to accept the main responsibility for the international leadership on the everyday level of work in the International. As for the North American movement, the SWP is the main organization and the LTF leadership of the SWP is developing a strong right-wing revisionist tendency and a federalist concept of building the International. Thus our West European movement is the only regional base which can accept the main responsibility of supporting the international leadership at the present

stage despite the fact that there are various political and organizational problems in the West European movement today. The whole International must support the present West European based body of the International leadership in order to evolve toward a really worldwide based international leadership. It would be natural for the present body of the International leadership to have the North American cadres in its composition, and the coming new developments of other regional movements will give new international cadres to the international body of leadership.

### 14. Organizational Problems and Tasks—III.

At the present stage of the International, however, the West European based body of the International leadership presents the possibility of serious problems as an international leadership. That is, there is a real danger that the West European based international body might become a regional leadership body of West Europe under the pressure of the acute West European class struggle and the possible internal *problems of our West European movement*. The whole International should be clearly aware of this objective danger in order to resist the West European regional empiricism and spontaneity.

Here the core of the question lies in the very fact that the West European section-level leaderships are just in the process of forming themselves as more or less experienced and matured national political leaderships, with their empiricism, and sometimes, even now, pure empiricism, and that our West European movement has not formed its own international regional leadership (West European bureau of the Fourth International) with its European theses on the proletarian revolution. Therefore the present West European based international body of leadership is obliged to play a double role, that of the international leadership and the West European regional leadership and sometimes mixing the two. (For example, see the United Secretariat statement on May Day of this year, which was a West European May Day appeal but not a real International May Day appeal). *So the best and only possible way to protect the West European body of international leaderships from the possible and probable West European regional empiricism and spontaneity is to initiate definite and determined efforts to realize a West European regional internationalization of the movement and to build a permanent bureau of the West European movement. The International will be able to make our West European movement into a strong internationalist base of the International and to mobilize this regional movement for the real worldwide international class struggle most effectively and fully only through the deepest regional internationalization of our West European movement.*

October 30, 1975

(Note: This statement is written on the basis of the general line of a draft document for the 8th National Congress of the Japanese section of the Fourth International, presented by its Political Bureau).

## WE, THE POST-TROTSKY TROTSKYISTS . . .

by Sakai

[This article appeared in the July 14, 1975, Internationalist Tendency Newsletter. The introduction stated: "It is being circulated at his request, and because it deals with a fundamental aspect of the North American revolutionary perspective which has only been dealt with implicitly in most of the discussion so far, i.e., the relationship between the U.S. and world revolution." The IT provided the SWP National Office with a copy of this newsletter. Following the article is an exchange of correspondence between Comrades Sakai and Caroline Lund, and Sakai and Barry Sheppard concerning the same question.]

Tokyo, December 4, 1974

Dear Comrade,

(. . .) And I also agree very strongly with the Internationalist Tendency on the point that the organizational question is a real political question in the Socialist Workers Party. Our Japanese international commission studied the organizational resolution of the 1965 SWP convention, and our conclusion is that the organizational resolution violates the Statutes of the Fourth International on the question of the trial system and that there is a dubious point whether the expulsion of the Robertsonites was really legal or not. I cannot understand why the International has never posed the antidemocratic aspect of the resolution; we have just read the resolution because of the IT expulsion and we have been shocked by the organizational document. On this point, I have written a letter to our European comrades; if you haven't read the letter of mine, I will reproduce another copy for you.

As for the programmatic aspect of the question, I have read some parts of *Speeches to the Party* by Jim Cannon, the Cochranite minority document of 1953, the American Thesis, and another appendix of Jim Cannon, and his letters and several speeches. I think *Speeches to the Party* is very informative about the present LTF leadership of the SWP and its continuity from the early 1950s. I also read the "Course of U.S. Imperialism and the Revolutionary Struggle for a Socialist America," adopted at the SWP convention of 1969 [SWP Discussion Bulletin, Vol. 27, No. 11].

The I.T. document for the 1973 SWP convention says as follows: "We contend that Cannon's Thesis, although historically premature, remains valid as the embodiment of the future of the American revolution." (SWP Discussion Bulletin, Vol. 31, No. 18, p. 9). When I first read your I.T. document of 1973, I had not read Cannon's Theses, but now I have read the Theses. So now I can say that *the American Theses were fundamentally wrong even at the time of 1946*. I quote a part of my letter to Roman on the question:

". . .the 1946 Theses explain many things about the present LTF leadership of the SWP. *The position of the*

*document is a sort of 'American Messianism', and at the same time, an economism. If we read the organizational resolution of the SWP 1965 convention, the 1946 Theses are even now one of the basic programmatic documents for the SWP. Now, I think the basic political concept of the 'American Theses' is very wrong. We can discuss about the conjunctural aspects of the document, but its basic understanding about the interrelationship between the U.S. proletarian revolution and the international revolution outside the USA is wrong, which, I think, has been proved by the actual development of the international situation as a whole from the 1950s to the 1970s, especially the victory of the Chinese revolution in 1949 to the victorious resistance of the Vietnamese revolution. Now I feel that our basic political difference with the LTF SWP leadership exists in the understanding of the interrelationship between the U.S. proletarian revolution and other international revolutions as a whole."*

*Speeches to the Party* explains that the Cannon-Cochran fight was around the Third World Congress resolution and 1946 American Theses. And I think that the Third World Congress resolution and Comrade Pablo's *La Guerre Qui Vient—Capitalisme ou Socialisme*, (1952) (*The Coming War—Capitalism or Socialism*), are absolutely correct against Cannon's 1946 Theses. The central question is how to understand the interrelationship between the world revolutionary development as a whole and the U.S. political situation. U.S. imperialism is too powerful or it was too powerful. Without successive and serious blows to U.S. imperialism from other world revolutionary developments outside the USA, the U.S. proletariat will never be able to overthrow the state power of U.S. imperialist capitalism and to conquer state power. In this sense, as I said to you in my former letters, the Vietnamese revolution is a Vietnamese revolution, and, at the same time, it is a direct part of the U.S. revolution. In our Japanese understanding, every actual progress of the world revolution outside the USA, however deformed it might be, is an actual progress of the objective-subjective condition of the U.S. proletarian revolution. In this context, the LTF SWP leadership seems to have never understood the real meaning and importance of the Vietnamese revolution. The Japanese think that *their concept is the real orthodoxy of Trotskyism!* I think that the SWP has introduced a serious revision of Trotsky's conceptions on U.S. imperialism. Trotsky said as follows in 1929:

"It is precisely the international strength of the United States and her irresistible expansion arising from it, that compels her to include the powder magazines of the whole world into the foundation of her structure, i.e., all the antagonisms between the East and the West, the class struggle in Old Europe, the uprisings of the colonial masses, and all wars and revolutions. On the one hand, this transforms the North American capitalism into the

basic counterrevolutionary force of the modern epoch, constantly more interested in the maintenance of 'order' in every corner of the terrestrial globe; and on the other hand, this prepares the ground for a gigantic revolutionary explosion in this already dominant and still expanding world imperialist power. The logic of world relations indicates that the time of this explosion cannot lag very far behind that of proletarian revolution in Europe." (*The Third International After Lenin*, p. 8)

I think this was the basic concept of Trotsky on U.S. imperialism and its interrelationship with other world revolutionary developments, and he never gave up this position. WE, THE POST-TROTSKY TROTSKYISTS, have absolutely no reason to change and revise this fundamental thesis on U.S. imperialism. Section X of the American Theses says as follows:

"The role of America in the world is decisive. Should the European and colonial revolutions, now on the order of the day, precede in point of time the culmination of the struggle in the U.S., they would immediately be confronted with the necessity of defending their conquests against the economic and military assaults of the American imperialist monster. *The ability of the victorious insurgent peoples everywhere to maintain themselves would depend to a high degree on the strength and fighting capacity of the revolutionary labor movement in America.* . . .

"*But even should the revolution in Europe and other parts of the world be once again retarded, it will by no means signify a prolonged stabilization of the world capitalist system.* The issue of capitalism or socialism will not be finally decided until it is decided in the U.S. *Another retardation of the proletarian revolution in one country or another, or even one continent or another, will not save American imperialism from its proletarian nemesis at home.* (!!!) The decisive battles for the communist future of mankind will be fought in the U.S." (*Speeches to the Party*, p.331).

The above passages are one of the key points in the 1946 Theses, and the passages are absolutely wrong! The opposite is correct:

"If the revolution in Europe and other parts of the world be once again retarded, it will signify a prolonged stabilization of the world capitalist system"; and:

"Another retardation of the proletarian revolution in one continent or another will save American imperialism from its proletarian nemesis at home for a considerable period."

If we reflect on the actual development of the post-war situation on a world scale, I think the matter is absolutely clear. My understanding of the postwar development of the world situation is that, in the final analysis, the victory of the U.S.S.R. against Nazi Germany and the expansion of its international hegemony over the East European countries, the victory of the Chinese revolution and the gigantic economic and military development of Soviet power have been the real reasons which caused the decline of U.S. superiority in the postwar world in the 1950s and 1960s. Because of the enormous pressure from the USSR and China, U.S. imperialism has been forced to spend huge amounts of its economic surplus in armaments and to help a weakened Western Europe and Japan recover from the postwar crisis. If there had been no victorious

revolution in China and the USSR had very weak in the late 1940s and 1950s, the huge superiority of U.S. productive forces would have very easily enabled U.S. imperialism to "colonize" Western Europe and China-Japan!

It was the enormous political-military burdens of U.S. imperialism in the face of the really serious threat of the USSR and China in the actual postwar world situation which caused the decline of U.S. superiority over the world. The heroic and successful resistance of the Vietnamese revolution in the face of direct U.S. military intervention has been the final blow to the past superiority of U.S. productive forces. Since then, U.S. imperialism has entered a definite declining phase of its history. We had a prolonged and deformed "war-revolution" between the deformed world revolutionary forces and U.S. imperialism in the 1950s and 1960s, and we have had a real and crystal clear "war-revolution" in Vietnam for a long time. The world has experienced a deformed international dual power situation since the end of World War II, and the last reserve forces of world imperialism, the U.S. imperialists, have exhausted their reserve energies in the worldwide dual power situation of the postwar world. I think that politics have decided economics in the postwar world. Therefore, Japanese defend Pablo's theses of 1951-52 against the Cannonist theses. I think that Pablo was much more orthodox in his method and perspective on the world revolution in those years than Cannon.

As for the "mightiness" of U.S. imperialism, Trotsky said as follows:

"Nothing compels us to remain in an atomized Europe. It is precisely the revolutionary proletariat that can unify Europe, by transforming it into the proletarian United States of Europe. America is mighty. But we say: as against the united proletarian-peasant Europe, bound together with us into a single soviet federation, America will prove impotent." (*Europe and America*, Pathfinder Press, p. 31).

"Everywhere, in Europe as well as Asia, imperialist Americanism is colliding with revolutionary Bolshevism. These, comrades, are the two principles of modern history. . . Leninism and American imperialism—these two principles alone are now fighting in Europe; these two principles alone cut across both the Atlantic and the Pacific. The fate of mankind hinges on the outcome of the struggle between these two principles." (Ibid., p. 32)

"I spoke previously of the power of the United States vis-a-vis weakened Europe and the economically backward colonial peoples. But precisely in this power of the United States is its achilles' heel; in this power lies its growing dependence upon countries and continents economically and politically unstable. The United States is compelled to base its power on an unstable Europe, that is, on tomorrow's revolutions of Europe and on the national revolutionary movement of Asia and Africa. . . In order to maintain its internal equilibrium, the United States requires a larger and larger outlet abroad; but its outlet abroad introduces into its economic order more and more elements of European and Asiatic disorder. Under these conditions, a victorious revolution in Europe and in Asia would inevitably inaugurate a revolutionary epoch in the United States. And we need not doubt that once the revolution in the United States has begun, it will develop with a truly American speed. That is what follows from an

evaluation of the world situation as a whole. From what has been said, it also follows that America stands second in the line of revolutionary development. First in line are Europe and the Orient. Europe's transition to socialism must be conceived precisely with the following as a prospect: against capitalist America, and against its powerful opposition" (Ibid., p. 60)

"There cannot even be talk of a partitioned Europe being able, even under the dictatorship of the proletariat, to hold out economically so long as it remains dismembered. The proletarian revolution signifies the unification of Europe. . .

". . . We ourselves have grown sufficiently strong to be able to extend some help to revolutionary Europe during the most difficult months. Over and above this, we will provide for Europe an excellent bridge to Asia. . . The Soviet United States of Europe, together with our Soviet Union, will serve as the mightiest of magnets for the peoples of Asia, who will gravitate toward the establishment of the closest economic and political ties with proletarian Europe. If proletarian England loses India as a colony, then she will gain in her a companion in the European-Asiatic federation of peoples. The mighty bloc of peoples of Europe and Asia will be impregnable, and, above all, invulnerable against the power of the United States. We do not for a moment minimize this power. . . we consider that the power of the United States—such is the dialectic—is now the greatest lever of the European revolution. We don't close our eyes to the fact that, politically and militarily, this lever will be turned against the European revolution when it breaks out. . . It is quite possible that all that books and our own experience have taught us about the fight of the privileged classes for their domination will pale before the violence that American capital will try to inflict upon revolutionary Europe. But, unified Europe, in revolutionary collaboration with the peoples of Asia, will prove infinitely more powerful than the United States. Through the Soviet Union, the toilers of Europe and Asia will be indissolubly linked. In alliance with the insurgent Orient, the European revolutionary proletariat will wrest from American capital the control of the world economy, and will lay down the foundations for the Federation of Socialist Peoples of the whole earth." (Ibid. pp. 61-2)

First, in Trotsky's opinion, the fundamental method to be used to counter the huge counterrevolutionary potential of U.S. imperialism lies in the Eurasian federation of toilers under the banner of anti-imperialism and socialism; the Eurasian union of the oppressed will be much more powerful than the mighty power of U.S. imperialism. *The fundamental guarantee for the whole of humanity hinges on the possible Eurasian union of anti-imperialism and socialism, but not on the U.S. proletariat alone.* The Eurasian federation of anti-imperialism and socialism will serve as the mightiest of magnets for the U.S. proletariat, who will gravitate toward the establishment of, the closest economic and political ties with, the proletarian-peasant Eurasia. I think this Eurasian concept and perspective of Trotsky is still valid today. If the USSR and China are united on the anti-imperialist, socialist and democratic basis, the Eurasian collaboration would be very powerful, which would never have allowed the direct military intervention of U.S. imperialism in Vietnam. The bureauc-

atic nationalist antagonisms between the USSR and China have remained a serious obstacle to our world revolution. And, another example: without the Soviet nuclear weapons, we cannot counter the threat of U.S. nuclear war, so we defend the nuclear armament of the USSR and China. The West European proletarian revolution needs the East European political revolution for the socialist unification of the whole of Europe and for fighting back the counterrevolutionary threat of U.S. imperialism. In Asia, we have the same kind of logic between China and other imperialist and neo-colonialist countries.

Second, *"the decisive battles for the communist future of mankind will be fought"* (1946 Theses) *between the victorious advance of the European-Asiatic revolutions and counterrevolutionary U.S. imperialism; or, one-third or even one half of the "decisive battles" have already been fought out by the USSR, China, and the Vietnamese revolution.* In Trotsky's opinion, the decisive battles for survival of the whole of mankind are not between the U.S. capitalist ruling class and the U.S. proletariat on the national soil of the USA, but between the counterrevolutionary "Americanism" and the revolutionary "Bolshevism" of Europe and Asia, or of Europe, Asia-Africa-Latin America and North America, on a really international scale. The central battles are between U.S. imperialism and the whole world-revolutionary forces as an international whole. On this point, the resolution of the congress of reunification, *Dynamics of World Revolution*, has made a retreat from our Trotskyist orthodoxy to the Cannonist "American Messianism."

As for the IMT leadership, its position is not clear or is half-hearted or centrist on the above questions. In any case, the question we are presently dealing with is the nature of the SWP's programmatic position in its international or nationalist aspect. In my opinion, when the I.T. tries to start a serious programmatic effort, the first question should be how to define the concrete nature of the state power in the USA, that is, the nature of U.S. imperialism in the world. And your discussion on the nature of U.S. imperialism is an essential part of our international discussion for elaborating our contemporary program of the world revolution. I am fully convinced that, without a serious international discussion for such a program of the world revolution, our International will never be able to arrive at a real homogeneity.

As for the economist nature of the 1946 Theses, (section XII of the Theses), I will try to express my opinion in detail in another letter to you. So, a few words.

The last passage of section XII of the Theses says as follows:

"The American workers have the advantage of being comparatively free, especially among the younger and most militant layers, from reformist prejudices. (!!!) The class as a whole has not been infected with the debilitating poison of reformism, either of the classic 'Socialist' variety, or the latter-day Stalinist brand. As a consequence, once they proceed to action, they more readily accept the most radical solutions." (*Speeches to the Party*, p. 334).

I will never doubt the really militant nature of the U.S. proletariat because of the specific nature of the nation's history. The U.S. proletariat is very violent and militant, but militancy and violent nature in general does not mean everything for a fight for state power. The central question

is *the political nature* of the U.S. proletariat. I remember that in his discussion with the SWP comrades on the Negro question, Trotsky stressed the deep racist prejudice among the white workers. Yes, those white workers are comparatively free from reformist prejudices of the classic "Socialist" variety, or the latter-day Stalinist brand, because the U.S. working class has never had its mass workers' parties, but especially the white part of the U.S. working class has been infected with the debilitating poison of reformism of the two-bourgeois-parties system.

The 1946 Theses seem to be an adaptation to the spontaneist national militancy of the U.S. proletariat in its economic struggles. For a communist party, the central

question is how to organize the working class *politically* independent from every kind of bourgeois ideological influence for the working class march to state power. The Theses made no specific mention of the extreme importance of the internationalist education of the working class in the USA because of the enormous world role of U.S. imperialism. In general, the Theses unbelievably underestimate the essential tasks of fighting against bourgeois influences. And the lack of politics is substituted for by a "strong party-organization" in the Theses. The understanding of the vanguard party is not really Leninist, but rather very much functionalist. For the Bolshevik-Leninist, the essence of the party is its political party-program for state power.

**Appendix: An Exchange of Correspondence between  
Comrades Sakai and Caroline Lund, and Sakai and  
Barry Sheppard**

**1. Sakai to Caroline Lund**

Tokyo, September 17, 1974.

Dear Caroline,

Received your letter of September 11, and I think you will have received my letter of Sept. 15, when this letter reaches to you. We appreciate your efforts for the South Korean political prisoners, and I will turn the circular letter of your national office to M. I also received the text of our Latin America position paper; thanks to you or Mary-Alice.

Last week, our International Commission had its meeting, and we discussed about the present internal situation of the International. The IC meeting decided to make an extensive study about your SWP and especially about its history. Today our PB had its meeting, and it decided that it should present a special report on your July-4 PC/SWP decision. Our internal bulletin will appear with the materials of the July-4 PC/SWP decision before the coming CC meeting, so the CC meeting will take a position on the question. We will issue another statement supplemental to the former PB/JRCL statement on the matter, and now I am drafting the text for approval of the PB or of K. and K.; K. was nominated as a candidate member of IEC by the CC/JRCL at its May meeting.

I read the Cochran faction document attached to the "Speeches to the Party", and after that, I read other documents of the Cochran faction in the issues of "Education For Socialists"/"Toward a History of the Fourth International. Now I have just started to read Cannon's speeches and letters chronologically. Now I feel much more strongly that it is very important to study the history of the SWP in order to understand the present SWP and its LTF majority. I am not quite sure, but it seems to me that there is some continuity through the Cannon-Cochran faction fight, the Robertson case and the IT case of the present day. In any case I will make a study on your history, and I hope to become one of the experts of your party history in the International.

Fraternally yours,  
s/Sakai

**2. Excerpt from October 17 letter to Caroline Lund from Sakai**

When we read the "Theses of American Revolution" now, the 1946 "Theses" explains many things about the present LTF leadership of the SWP. The position of the document is a sort of "American Messianism" and, at the same time, an economism. If we read the organizational resolution of the SWP 1965 convention, the 1946 "Theses" are even now one of the basic programmatic documents for the SWP. Now, I think, the basic political concept of the "American Theses" is very wrong. We can discare about

the conjunctural aspects of the document, but its basic understanding about the interrelation between the U.S. proletarian revolution and the international revolution outside the USA is wrong, which, I think, has been proved by the actual development of the international situation as a whole from the 1950s to the 1970s, especially from the victory of the Chinese revolution in 1949 to the victorious resistance of the Vietnamese revolution. Now I feel that our basic political difference with the LTF SWP leadership exists in the understanding of the interrelation between the U.S. proletarian revolution and other international revolutions as a whole.

The next meeting of our international commission will have a discussion on the "Theses on the American Revolution" and the "Theses on the World Role of American Imperialism" adopted at the founding conference of the Fourth International.

In this week, I read "Europe and America" which you sent me and I wrote an article on the pamphlet for a student paper. I was very much impressed by the two speeches of Trotsky, and I think that his programmatic formulation about the "European-Asiatic federation of peoples", at the last two pages of the pamphlet, is even now absolutely correct in its essence. If possible, please send me a copy of Trotsky's letter of March 1929 to the American Opposition: "Tasks of the American Opposition" in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1929)* (see the note 5 of page 305, *Leon Trotsky on Britain*).

As I said to you in the train to Sendai, I had a hope to collect all works of Trotsky on U.S. imperialism, and now I have decided my mind that I would really make the survey and write an article under the title of "Trotsky on U.S. imperialism". If possible, I want to write an introduction to the Japanese edition of Trotsky's "Europe and America".

**3. Caroline Lund to Sakai**

New York  
Dec. 2, 1974

Tokyo

Dear Sakai,

I have been wanting to answer your letter of Oct. 17 for a long time, but had to finish some pressing work first.

When I and several other comrades here read your comments on the "American Theses," the Cochran fight, and their relationship to the current discussion in the International, we were very glad to see others in the International seriously looking back into these questions. I think you are right that the "American question" and the disagreements in 1953 over the American Theses are very relevant to the current debate, especially in relation to the question of organizational norms in a revolutionary party.

I have enclosed a copy of a speech on the American Theses by Cannon that was printed in the October 1974 ISR. This speech makes clear that the Theses was

fundamentally *not* a conjunctural document based on the labor upsurge following the second world war, but rather an analysis of the broad perspectives for the American revolution in the postwar period.

I think your characterization of the Theses as “American Messianism” is wrong. The position the document takes about the centrality of the American revolution to the world revolution is a materialist one.

The first two theses state the objective, materialist basis for the coming American revolution. They make clear that the perspectives for the American revolution stem not from any *minimization* of the importance of the revolution in the colonial world and other parts of the world, but rather from an understanding of the profound *implications* of the world revolution in undermining U.S. imperialism, not only from the outside, but internally. The theses say that the revolutionary potential in the U.S. stems precisely from the fact that U.S. imperialism is based on, and rooted in, the *world* economy, and therefore in its “chronic dislocations” and “revolutionary powderkegs.”

As Cannon explains in the speech published in the ISR, the perspectives reoutlined in the Theses were not just the idea of the SWP leaders, but were the result of discussions and collaboration with Trotsky. Cannon cites some of the places where Trotsky wrote about his view of the American revolution—including the Letter to the American Opposition, which I sent you earlier. [This letter was printed in the June 1, 1929, issue of *The Militant*, and will be reprinted in an upcoming volume of the Trotsky *Writings* series edited by Pathfinder Press. The relevant paragraph reads: “The work to be achieved by the American Opposition has international-historic significance, for in the last historic analysis all the problems of our planet will be decided upon American soil. There is much in favor of the idea that from the standpoint of revolutionary order, Europe and the East stand ahead of the United States. But a course of events is possible in which this order might be broken in favor of the proletariat of the United States. Moreover, even if you assume that America which now shakes the whole world will be shaken last of all, the danger remains that a revolutionary situation in the United States may catch the vanguard of the American proletariat unprepared, as was the case in Germany in 1923, in England in 1926, and in China in 1925 to 1927. We must not for a minute lose sight of the fact that the might of American capitalism rests more and more upon a foundation of world economy with its contradictions and crises, military and revolutionary. This means that a social crisis in the United States may arrive a good deal sooner than many think, and have a feverish development from the beginning. Hence the conclusion: It is necessary to prepare.”]

In addition to the documents Cannon mentions (I am sending you one of them that you might not have seen—Trotsky’s *Marxism in Our Time*, in another envelope), the book *The Third International After Lenin* is illuminating from this point of view. One of the criticisms Trotsky made of Stalin’s Draft Program for the Comintern was its ignoring of the whole question of the growing role of U.S. imperialism. The lack of analysis on this question was a reflection of Stalin’s general lack of an internationalist and materialist perspective, a consequence of his theory of “socialism in one country.” I have enclosed a copy of a

page from *The Third International After Lenin* (pages 8, 9 of new Pathfinder edition). See how Trotsky points to the interrelationship of the world economic crisis, the ruthlessness of U.S. imperialism against its imperialist competitors, and the generation of *internal* crises in the USA.

In Trotsky’s article *Marxism in Our Time*, he predicts that in the sphere of “an independent class movement of the proletariat” and the spread of “genuine Marxism,” “America will in a few jumps catch up with Europe and outdistance it.”

Certainly you wouldn’t accuse Trotsky of “American Messianism.” His conclusions follow from a materialist understanding that the laws of the class struggle apply with exceptional force in the most highly developed capitalist country because the contradictions there are the deepest—despite the surface appearance and the temporary backwardness of the American working class.

Also, I think it’s important to note that in the speech in the ISR, Cannon explains how the Theses “represent a new stage, in my opinion, in the development of the concept of internationalism in America.” It’s *internationalism*—not Messianism—to recognize and take on the responsibilities that face revolutionary Marxists in the United States. Don’t you agree?

I also wanted to comment on the connection between what you call our perspective of “American Messianism” and the organizational norms of the SWP. When we had the discussion of the Internationalist Tendency split in your Political Bureau, I think we were all rather surprised to learn that our organizational concepts were so different. This underscores the need for a thorough discussion of the organizational question in the International.

I just wanted to raise a couple of ideas here, and hopefully you will respond with your thinking on them.

Perhaps when you refer to the SWP’s “American Messianism” you mean not only that we see the American revolution as key to the world revolution, but also that we say the current SWP cadres, and others trained by them, are going to be the nucleus of the leadership of that revolution. We think the SWP is the nucleus of the revolutionary party in this country, and that we have to build the party *right now* along the lines of the necessary revolutionary instrument.

And just as our perspectives for the American revolution originated with Trotsky, so too our organizational principles originated with the Bolsheviks. It’s Lenin who explained that the revolutionary party has to be a tempered instrument of combat.

When we had the discussion on the IT split last summer, you and the other comrades objected very much to what I said about the requirement of *loyalty* to the party and the rights of the party as a whole to protect itself from a disloyal minority. But loyalty is necessary in a combat party.

Actually, a certain degree of loyalty is necessary to hold together *any* voluntary organization—without it it would fall apart. If you don’t want to build an organization, why join it? One of the distinguishing features of Leninism is *consciousness* of the need for the *strongest* loyalty in a revolutionary party. This consciousness flows from an understanding of the life-and-death nature of the struggle we are engaged in. We are building parties of people who will have to fight alongside each other, and who have to be willing to place their lives in the hands of their comrades.

For such a struggle we need a party *only* of people who can be trusted as loyal to the party and ready to accept its discipline. We can't postpone the application of such norms "until the time comes," either. We are in that time now.

The norms of democratic centralism apply inside national sections in a different way than within the International as a whole. The reason is that the tasks of the sections and of the International are carried forward on a different level. The national sections have to *make the revolution* in their countries. Our enemy—the capitalist class—has to be defeated on the level of each nation-state.

This is why we place such importance on the building of national leaderships—real leaders in each country who are selected and trained on the basis of concrete experience in the class struggle of their country. This is also why we think the key to building the International is international collaboration—helping national leaderships to learn to think and act for themselves, not giving orders to sections from the center, and certainly not having the center operate behind the backs of the national leaderships, as the IMT did in the case of the IT splitters.

You are right, I think, to see a continuity between the Cochran fight in 1953 and the IT split, in regard to this question of organizational norms (although not, I think, in regard to the content of the political debate). The problem in 1953 was that Pablo looked at the Cochran-Clark grouping from a purely factional standpoint, rather than from the standpoint of building the International. Pablo couldn't see that *whatever* the political positions of the Cochran grouping were at the time, loyalty to the International meant operating in an honest, collaborative manner with the majority leadership of the SWP, which represented the continuity of valuable cadres, tested and trained in the living class struggle in this country.

I have also enclosed a transcript of a discussion between Cannon and Trotsky that was recently published for the first time in IP (Oct. 7, 1974)—maybe you have already read it. Some sections relate to this question of organizational norms. I marked a section on page 1307 where Cannon explains why he thinks it is important to neither split easily nor to take splitters back into the party easily. You might have read in *Speeches to the Party* where Cannon explains the same thing in regard to the Cochran fight.

In your Political Bureau discussion, you comrades seemed to think that the SWP's firmness with the IT splitters was bureaucratism or some kind of power move. It was the opposite; it was from considerations of how best to preserve the revolutionary party and its norms. We think the Leninist attitude is to place the highest value on revolutionary cadres, on the human embodiment of the revolutionary program. This means you do not enforce organizational norms in a light-minded manner. If a comrade violates the norms of the party, you allow him or her every opportunity to see and correct their mistakes. But on the other hand, when it becomes clear that a grouping has discounted loyalty to the party and is consciously out to disrupt or destroy the party, the firmest action is necessary. Otherwise the whole revolutionary fiber of the party becomes undermined, and a deadly cynicism begins to corrode comrades' attitudes toward themselves and their party.

The statement by your Political Bureau on the IT split

says that when we found out the IT was acting like a rival party inside the party, we should have simply warned them to cease acting in that way, and give them another chance. But we *had* warned the IT numerous times before. In fact, the 1973 convention of the SWP issued an explicit warning to the IT. You should read Jack Barnes' report which is printed in SWP Internal Information Bulletin No. 7 (1974). The speech was a clear warning to the IT, but they didn't listen.

One final point related to all this. I remember one of your criticisms of the LTF Political Resolution was that at some points it discusses the question of the party and of leadership as a separate question. You said, "You cannot separate the party from the program." Of course we do not separate it from the program—the resolution is talking only about revolutionary Marxist leadership. But we have to talk about the importance of the *party*, specifically, because that is the living instrument of the program; without the party, without human material, you would have a program existing only as an abstraction.

I think you must agree that singling out the question of leadership and the party for special consideration is one of the key characteristics of Trotskyism. That's what Trotsky was talking about in the Transitional Program when he said that the crisis of humanity was reduced to a crisis of leadership.

Trotsky also wrote about this in his *Criticism of the Draft Program of the Comintern*, in the chapter "Strategy and Tactics in the Imperialist Epoch." I have enclosed a copy of two pages (82 and 83) where Trotsky explains how the imperialist epoch—with its sudden political shifts and revolution to counterrevolution—makes the leadership question all the more important. You need a party of trained, tested, skilled professional politicians that can keep its bearings and hold true to revolutionary principles in intervening amid such pressures and disorienting shifts.

Well, I think I have written a very long letter, but I have been thinking about these questions since last August and wishing we could continue the discussion. I will be interested to hear any comments you have on these things, or on Cannon's *Speeches to the Party*.

Comradely greetings,  
Caroline Lund

#### 4. Barry Sheppard to Sakai

14 Charles Lane  
New York, N.Y. 10014  
September 12, 1975

Dear Comrade Sakai,

I will not be able to attend the meeting of the JRCL central committee on September 21-23, because of commitments here in our anticacist work. Comrade Dunder, a member of the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction Steering Committee, will be able to attend the meeting however, and thus it would be useful for you to "take a full afternoon for the discussion about the present internal situation and problems of the International at the central committee meeting," as you suggested in your letter of September 3.

Your letter refers to a document prepared by the JRCL Political Bureau on the present situation of the international. Do you have an English translation of this document?

The Internationalist Tendency has printed a letter by you entitled "We, the Post-Trotsky Trotskyists" in their *Newsletter* dated July 14, 1975. The IT has furnished the SWP with a copy of the *Newsletter*, in which they explain that this document is being circulated to the members of the IT at your request "because it deals with a fundamental aspect of the North American revolutionary perspective which has only been dealt with implicitly in most of the discussion so far, i.e., the relationship between the U.S. and world revolution."

We welcome a discussion in the international on the American question and the SWP. However, we think that it would be better if this discussion was conducted openly before the whole international. This becomes all the more important, since your views of the SWP have led you to question the political basis of the 1963 reunification of the Fourth International, and we notice you have initiated a discussion on this question within the IMT. The members of the SWP should know your views, and the views of any other comrades in the international, on these subjects. Therefore we are reprinting your letter in an SWP Internal Information Bulletin.

Along these same lines, your letter to the IT states: ". . . we have just read the resolution [the Organizational Character of the Socialist Workers Party] because of the IT expulsion and we have been shocked by the organizational document. On this point, I have written a letter to our European comrades; if you haven't read the letter of mine, I will reproduce another copy for you." Could you please also send a copy of this letter to the SWP, as we haven't seen it either?

You also quote from another "letter to Roman" concerning your view of the 1946 American Thesis. Could you please send the SWP a copy of this letter also?

I note that you now plan to hold your national congress in January. I hope that I will be able to attend.

Comradely,  
Barry Sheppard

CC: United Secretariat

## 5. Sakai to Barry Sheppard

Tokyo, September 24, 1975

Dear Comrade Barry Sheppard,

Received your letter of September 12. Thank you. Comrade Dunder attended our central committee meeting together with Comrade Roman. The central committee meeting spent about 13 hours on the Portuguese question

and the other international questions, and I think that Comrade Dunder presented the positions of the LTF very well to the CC meeting. Anyway you will receive his report on the CC meeting. . . . We thank the LTF for sending its representative to our central committee meeting. Comrade Dunder made for the CC meeting his best contribution to clarifying the problems facing the International; we have gotten a clear idea about those problems especially because of his intervention. Thanks a lot.

As for the congress document on the International, I summarized the content of it in my report to the CC meeting, so you will be able to get some idea about the document from Comrade Dunder. Anyway we will translate the document into English for the internal international discussion in anticipation of expecting contributions from the comrades of the International for our congress in January, 1976.

I thank the SWP leadership for printing my short note, "We, the Post-Trotsky Trotskyists," in the SWP Internal Information Bulletin, and I asked our IT comrades to give a copy of my corrected text to the SWP leadership when I asked them to publish it in the IT Newsletter.

I appreciate the following statement in your letter of September 12 very much: "We welcome a discussion in the international on the American question and the SWP." And, in your letter of September 12, you say, ". . . your views of the SWP have led you to question the political basis of the 1963 reunification of the Fourth International . . ." As for me, I think that members of the International have the right to discuss the unity documents of 1963 in the organizational framework of the unified International. I stand for the reunification of 1963, but I have my own opinion on the document "Dynamics of World Revolution Today." I expressed a part of that opinion at the last IEC meeting. I hope that our Japanese Political Bureau or I, myself, can have a chance to express our opinion in a systematic way on the point in the international as a part of the international discussion on the international program.

As for my "letter to European comrades," I will consider the possibility of publishing it in the International, but I will first try to write an answer to Comrade Mary-Alice Waters' letter replying to the Japanese Political Bureau statement on the SWP/IT question. As for my "letter to Roman," I have quoted the concerned part in my short note, so it is not necessary to send you the letter. And you can find the same quote in my letter to Comrade Caroline Lund, dated October 17, 1974.

\* \* \*

Fraternally yours,  
Sakai

cc: United Secretariat