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Remarks on World Movement by Compass Tendency Representative at SWP Special Convention

December 1973

[The following are the remarks made by Comrade Herb at the special national convention of the Socialist Workers Party, December 26-28, 1973. He was speaking for the Compass Tendency of the Gruppe Internationale Marxisten, the German section of the Fourth International. The remarks have not been corrected or edited by the speaker.]

On Latin America

Comrades, I think it's a good sign for the democracy in our movement to also give time to political currents inside the Fourth International which are not as big as both the international tendencies. The Compass Tendency is not a third international tendency; we are a national tendency in the German section and we are in a bloc with other national tendencies in France, Italy, Denmark and Britain. We do not want to repeat a mistake others have already made to call a bloc a tendency, and therefore we are not a third international tendency; we cannot function as an international tendency; we cannot function on a world scale with a few tendencies in a few countries, and we will only turn ourselves into an international tendency if this becomes necessary to defend our democratic rights within the International.

I will give a brief summary of our positions on Latin America. I already said that we cannot function as an international tendency so it would be absurd for us to try to work out our own balance sheet about Bolivia and Argentina. We cannot do this simply with some tendencies in a few European countries. We therefore decided to give critical support to the balance sheet on Bolivia and Argentina of the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction. We think that basically the criticisms in this document on the line of the Ninth World Congress and how it was carried out are correct.

That does not mean that we identify ourselves with every part of the policy of the LTF in Latin America. For example, we think that the comrades of the LTF should have criticized the PRT group of Uruguay and not only given fraternal advice as Comrade Joe Hansen did in his contribution.

One point I want to mention is that we think that there is a certain connection between the line in Latin America and some traditions inside the Fourth International—especially traditions which are represented by the present leadership of Mandel, Maitan, Frank—some connections that go back to the time after the second world war. We can understand this tradition and don't want to make a slander of it. We know that the Fourth International was very weak at the time, very weak after World War II; that the Fourth International, with very few exceptions,

did not have the possibility to really influence the process of class struggle and that in this context we can understand some deviations.

The essence of these deviations—and that goes right back to Pablo—is a tendency to overestimate the dynamics of the objective process of revolution, which means to underestimate the question of the subjective factor. The task of the Fourth International becomes one of trying to influence that force which is really at the head of the objective process of revolution.

I don't want to tell the whole story. It starts with the question of entryism, with the idea that under the pressure of the cold war, the Stalinist Communist parties would be able to make the revolution in Europe. The same mistake is repeated then in the colonial revolution and the positions on the Algerian government. As you know, Pablo played a far-reaching role on this question. And we think the same thing is involved in the Latin American orientation. The dynamic of the objective process should lead to a synchronization of the revolutionary process on a continental scale. At the head of this process was Castroism and armed struggle, and therefore the task of the Fourth International should be to orient in that direction.

The difference between the Latin American strategy of armed struggle of this majority and other examples in the past of the Fourth International is that today the leaders of the International think we are strong enough to play such a role ourselves, to substitute for this force which leads the objective revolutionary process, to substitute for the revolutionary process itself. So we have to find the bridge from our small size to this force which leads this objective revolutionary process. That means to find some kind of breakthrough which will put us at the head of this process—where Castroism stood in Latin America.

A very typical example of this was the famous insufficient document of Livio Maitan just one year before the Ninth World Congress, where he wrote, "Let me express myself a little bit paradoxically but I say that the Fourth International today will be built around Bolivia." That was exactly the idea behind this line; to make such a breakthrough, not only to influence Castroism, not only to influence the thrust of this objective dynamic of revolutionary process as they saw it, but to take the place of Castroism in this process in a special country where we might have the Fourth play the role Castroism played in Cuba. And then, perhaps, we would see the establishment of a workers state in Bolivia with strong Trotskyist influence, or something like that.

We think that the resolution of the Ninth World Congress contained very grave mistakes, not only in its pro-

jected conclusions, but also in the analysis. We think it is not enough to give a framework for the whole continent—which may be right—such as the question of the terms of trade with America, the question of industrialization, and so on. But this more or less correct general analysis hid the fact that differentiations between the sectors of the Latin American continent still exist—and not only still exist but are also deepening in some sectors.

That means that if you compare these different sectors of Latin America—Brazil, La Plata, the countries in the north and Mexico—then you must come to the conclusion (I will not explain the whole analysis, but you must come to the conclusion) that you cannot have the same strategy for all sectors of Latin America. The social, economic and political situations in these different sectors are absolutely different. For example, in Argentina the revolutionaries face the problem of finding a way to lead the working class to political independence, the fight to free this proletariat from bourgeois control, exercised through Peronism. This was the role of Peronism even before Perón came back to power of course. The task in Bolivia is totally different. No one can say that the main task in Bolivia is to break the control of the MNR over the Bolivian working class, because the MNR has no control of the Bolivian working class.

The military dictatorships are not the same either. The military dictatorship in Brasilia has the possibility to widen its interior market and to promote a certain neo-capitalist industrialization which can win the petty-bourgeois layers of society over to the military dictatorship. This is quite different from the military dictatorship in Bolivia where the social-economic situation prevents the dictatorship from establishing a new balance of forces, and so on. So we think that today we can have a general framework of analysis for Latin America, but we do not think we can have a common strategy for Latin America.

Now, I don't want to come back to the Latin American analysis, which is not the most important point. I think the most important point is that the mistake of the Latin American orientation of 1969 was not only *not* corrected, but it was deepened. The mistake has become graver. Conjunctural analysis is transformed to a full strategy. That is what they call the "strategy of armed struggle."

For revolutionary Marxists there does not exist such a thing as an independent strategy of armed struggle. Therefore, the criticisms they made of the PRT (Combatiente)—that the PRT (Combatiente) did not link its armed struggle with the mass movement—is an absolutely wrong criticism. The problem is not to have a strategy of armed struggle and to find a way to link it with the revolutionary process, with the mass movements, with the class struggle. The organization must have an orientation to the class struggle and for the class struggle and the question of armed struggle derives from this work. That means that the role of an organization, the role of a party, in the armed struggle can never be stronger than its political role and can never be stronger than its influence inside the class struggle. Otherwise, armed struggle is only substitutionism—and that is the "strategy of armed struggle" of the international majority.

The decisive question is the implantation of the revolutionary program inside the working class. That also means

the implantation of the revolutionary organization in the working class and the building of the revolutionary party. That means we must reach a point where we can lead the development of the class struggle, where we can give the program to the working class, and can provide the leadership for the revolutionary process of the class struggle itself.

And if we can solve this problem then the question of armed tactics is absolutely secondary. Whether or not the revolutionary process culminates in a victory does not depend on the question of independent armed detachments, but on the question of the program and leadership of the working class in such a revolutionary uprising. If the leadership is petty-bourgeois or reformist or Stalinist, you can have as many independent armed forces as you want and still be defeated. The problem in Chile was not one of having too few guns or something like that; it was a problem of the leadership of the working class. That's what led to the defeat.

And this comes back to the point I mentioned before, the tradition of the majority leaders of the Fourth International. The revolutionary process is something objective for them; it develops independently of our role in it and reaches a dual power situation, a revolutionary situation, and then we must be there with the correct strategy, with the correct strategy to win state power, to win over the workers, and so on.

Their understanding of party building is not one of implanting our program in the working class and building our party by intervening in the class struggle and winning the class to our program, to our line. Their concept is to build the party as a special part of the class struggle, as a special force of the class struggle, outside the process of the class struggle, and then the party enters the revolutionary process. That is really their concept of party building. When the objective process creates a revolutionary situation, dual power, then the party is there with the correct concepts, the party arms the workers and then the party is victorious in the final military clash. Until then the party has nothing to do other than to prepare for this situation with certain armed actions and certain training and independent exemplary actions to show the masses the way.

On Europe

In its present form the Europe perspectives document cannot be adopted at the world congress.

We appeal to the comrades of the IMT, at least to those comrades of the IMT who are able to come back to earth, to accept some important changes in the document. Otherwise, if this document were to be adopted, it would have disastrous effects on the work of our European organizations. Then our only hope would be that the European organizations of the Fourth International would not take this document too literally.

We think it is bad to have a world congress document that we hope will not be taken literally by the European sections.

Of course, I want to stress that the work the European sections are carrying out today is better than the line of the European perspectives document. That is true, for

example, for countries like Belgium where the author of the European document resides. It is absolutely clear that the Belgian section today is not working along the line of the European document and we do hope they will not start working on that new mass vanguard line after the world congress.

At first we thought that the European perspectives document should be adopted. But differences became clear during the debate, and especially during the process of working out national perspective documents for the different European organizations of the Fourth International. In Germany, when the strong supporters of the European document tried to work out a national perspectives document applying that line, it became clear what this line would mean in practice for our organization.

The European document has many weaknesses but I—and the Compass Tendency—think some of these weaknesses can be overcome by amendments. We have proposed some amendments which you can read, so I will not go into this.

I will use my time to take up the central point of difference on the European document: the concept of the new mass vanguard.

Comrade Germain, in his recent polemic against the positions of our tendency—which is not yet available in English—agreed that the concept of the new mass vanguard is the key to the European document and if the Compass rejects this concept then he says the whole European document will become inoperative. It will be useless; it will serve no political purpose.

The concept of the new mass vanguard in the European document is, roughly speaking, the following:

First: there is a new mass vanguard with a relatively mass character and this new mass vanguard is a political vanguard.

Second: the central strategic task of our organization is to win hegemony in this new mass vanguard. This constitutes the theory of stages of party building. The current stage is winning hegemony in this new mass vanguard. Comrade Germain wrote in his document, "without thinking in stages, you cannot build the party." So he confirms that he has a theory of stages on this question.

And third: by winning hegemony in this new mass vanguard, we must turn this new mass vanguard into an adequate instrument for intervening in the class struggle. This will give us a qualitatively stronger influence in the class struggle than we can achieve with our own forces. That is the essence of the concept of the new mass vanguard, the "NMV."

I will go through it very rapidly point by point.

First, what is the new mass vanguard? In the argumentation of the international majority it sounds like a teleological argument for the existence of God. They all agree that the new mass vanguard exists and now it is our job to define it. And, as Mary-Alice said, everyone gives their own definition. The most astonishing definition is the one I heard today. I never heard it in Europe. But today Comrade Jon Rothschild said that the new mass vanguard also includes those workers who act independently of their bureaucratic leadership and are to the left of the bureaucratic leaderships although they remain under the political control of these bureaucracies and have not broken with them on the political level. And therefore, he says, there is no need to exclude rank-and-file workers belong-

ing to the Stalinist parties, and so on.

Comrades, this definition of the new mass vanguard—acting independently and to the left of the bureaucratic leadership without having broken politically with the CP and the SP—is applicable for the most important sectors of the entire German working class between the strikes of September 1969 and the big strike wave in the summer of this year. Thus we would have a new mass vanguard in West Germany which includes the main sectors of the West German proletariat. And winning the hegemony in the new mass vanguard would be the same thing as winning hegemony in the industrial working class itself. So it is an absolutely useless definition.

It is absolutely clear also that the whole industrial working class of Italy fought independently and to the left of the bureaucratic leadership, without really breaking ideologically with the Communist Party. So the whole Italian working class, especially during the period of the autumn of 1969, belongs to the new mass vanguard. What sense does this make?

And there is another problem with this definition. How can this be a *political* vanguard? The majority says it is a political vanguard, that the only possible way to define this vanguard is in a political manner. How can you speak of a political vanguard when you say that on the political level they are still under the control of the CP and SP and so on? Perhaps Comrade Rothschild thought that this definition could help him to overcome some difficulties in the internal debate in the SWP, but it has nothing to do with the real concept of the new mass vanguard.

I will not repeat the definitions of the new mass vanguard offered by various members of the international majority. I will say what they really mean. What they really mean by the new mass vanguard is the radicalized layers that came out of the youth radicalization and the student revolt which played a very big role in Europe in 1967-69, and also affected some workers. Not many, but some workers were assimilated by this student movement and radicalized outside the process of class struggle. The number is very limited and most of these workers are today no longer workers. The result of this assimilation by the student rebellion is that they left the productive sector and became students too. You all know that phenomenon.

It is absolutely clear in our opinion that the theory of the new mass vanguard is the extension of the theory of the youth radicalization into the working class. They want to apply the same methods successfully used for the student revolt, the youth radicalization, at the end of the 1960s. They want to use the same concepts now for a situation in which we have an ongoing working-class radicalization in Europe.

I want to raise a question: is this new mass vanguard, are these radicalized layers really a new political vanguard? The international majority gives three examples to prove that such a political vanguard exists and that it is not the same as a workers vanguard and it is not the same as a political vanguard in the sense of Leninist revolutionary organization. All three examples are false.

The first example that they give is what they call the internationalist vanguard on the question of World War I, the Zimmerwald movement, etc. There was a layer with different ideologies which stood against the imperialist war, and therefore, on this specific point, played a van-

guard role. This internationalist vanguard, as they call it, was composed of anarchists, pacifists, centrists and Leninists, and they played a vanguard role only on a single point—that is opposition to the imperialist war. Even on the question of how to fight against the imperialist war they were not a vanguard. They had very different approaches. The pacifists, of course, had a totally different approach than the Bolsheviks. Lenin never dreamt of calling this whole layer in general a new vanguard, a political vanguard. He never dreamt that these elements—including anarchists, pacifists and centrists who were against the imperialist war—could be made into an adequate instrument for the class struggle as a whole. It's absurd. So some of the IMT are confusing a passing vanguard role on one single point with functioning as a real vanguard in the political fight, in political life.

The second example they give is that Trotsky spoke of his supporters, of the supporters of the Left Opposition, as the vanguard of the vanguard. That is an absolutely different thing than the new mass vanguard we have today. The Comintern was the organized revolutionary vanguard in the Leninist sense and it underwent a process of degeneration. So, of course, those who opposed this process of Stalinization could be called the vanguard of the vanguard. That has nothing in common with the proposition that the new mass vanguard is a political vanguard.

The third example is the most astonishing. It is their comparison of this new mass vanguard with the formation and growth of the vanguard in the period of 1918 to 1933. The formation and the growth of a political vanguard in the period of 1918 to 1933 was a process in which the Comintern was formed, a process in which an organized alternative revolutionary class leadership for the whole world proletariat was formed. Communist parties, leading the most important sectors of the working class in many important capitalist countries, emerged.

So what has that to do with this concept of the new mass vanguard with no organizational form and outside the proletariat itself?

The IMT's attempt to define a new mass vanguard as a political vanguard is possible only because they stay on the level of a very abstract generalization, excluding political content. When the European perspectives document says that the new mass vanguard is mainly young and mainly outside the industrial sector, this is irrelevant. It is a description. It has nothing to do with the characterization of a political vanguard.

Their characterization of the new mass vanguard as a political vanguard is based on the assertion that it has a general, diffuse, anticapitalist consciousness; that it is outside the control of the bureaucratic apparatuses; that it is able to engage in independent actions; and that certain parts of our program can appeal to it. If we ask, what is the concrete function of the new mass vanguard (as defined), what is its role in the class struggle and in the implementation of the revolutionary program inside the working class, then the whole construction of the new mass vanguard breaks down.

I will give you one example. Take the Band of Baader—the Red Faction, or the Baader-Meinhoff group as it was called. Now no one can deny that they are young and outside of the industrial sector. No one can deny that they are outside the control of the traditional bureaucratic apparatuses. No one can deny that they have some kind

of diffuse anticapitalist consciousness. Their capacity for independent action, of course, needs no comment. And of course armed struggle, which is an important part of our program, as the majority will agree with me, appealed very much to them. The same could be said of other groups, such as the Attica Brigade, etc. So the whole definition of the new mass vanguard perfectly suits such organizations as the Baader-Meinhoff group.

I will not accuse the international majority of holding that the Baader-Meinhoff group can be an adequate instrument of the class struggle. Of course not. It is not a problem of ultraleft deviations. What the example shows, is that the concept is inoperative. It makes no sense to analyze the vanguard on this level, which excludes the question of political content—what kind of independent organizations, of independent interventions, what is the result, what is the function for the class struggle of such diffuse anticapitalist consciousness, and so on and so on.

Our opinion is that we cannot use the term vanguard while excluding from the definition of vanguard its concrete function in the class struggle. And if we examine its concrete function in the class struggle, then we will see that the so-called new mass vanguard is composed of very different layers, ranging from different political organizations (anarchists, spontaneists, Maoists, centrists and so on), to the supporters of these different organizations, to potentially anticapitalist elements and movements of certain parts of society like the student movement, to certain elements which can potentially be mobilized by the revolutionary organization. And our relationship to each of the different parts of this so-called new mass vanguard is different.

Our relation to Maoist organizations, for example, and to centrist organizations is that we can have unity in action with them on questions like repression and so on, but politically we have to fight against them. Our relationship to the supporters of these organizations is different. We try to win them over to our organization, to our orientation by showing that our line is more correct than the line of the organization they follow and that we have the correct answers for the class struggle. Our relationship to the potential in the different parts of society is again different. We try to develop such movements in the direction of the class struggle itself, toward the main struggle between wage labor and capital.

So the term new mass vanguard is a formalistic generalization which is inoperative and which is predicated on homogeneity of this vanguard which really does not exist.

I will give a good example of this. In Heidelberg, a university town where this so-called new mass vanguard is very strong, one day we had a demonstration of 5,000 against the police coming into the university; 5,000 demonstrated against that. The majority would say this is the new mass vanguard of Heidelberg. Three days later we had another demonstration on the question of Vietnam. The organizations which called for this demonstration were exactly the same organizations which had called for the demonstration against the police. But 1,000 came out for that demonstration. So what happened to the new mass vanguard? Has it declined in three days from 5,000 to 1,000?

What this shows is precisely the different currents inside this new mass vanguard. The first demonstration involved all those who could be mobilized on the level

of the university struggle and the fight against police interference in the university there. For the other demonstration, on Vietnam, only a small part of them could be mobilized.

The new mass vanguard is a synthesis of various currents produced by using very abstract and very formalistic generalizations which are inoperative. We would therefore say that the term "new mass vanguard" is a mystification. And because it stems from an empirical view that such radicalized layers came out of the process of the radicalization during the 1960s, we would say it is an objectivistic mystification.

On the concept of winning hegemony in this new mass vanguard, making it an adequate instrument for the class struggle, there are two possibilities. The first alternative is that we win them to our orientation and we recruit them. No one is against that. But then the whole European document would be useless. So they clearly mean something else. They mean to make them an adequate instrument on some other level than recruiting and winning them — on the level where the anarchists remain anarchists, the Maoists remain Maoists, and those who are not organized but can only be mobilized on special issues remain in that status, and so on. But we would win the hegemony in this radicalized layer, and therefore could dictate the questions on which mobilizations would take place. Then all these different organizations, these different layers would follow us and organize common actions in the class struggle with us.

Under this condition—that we will not recruit them, that we will not win them over to our organization, to our orientation—what will be the political content of our intervention in this so-called new mass vanguard? It will be based on the lowest common denominator, of course—activity that Maoists can agree with, can join in without becoming Trotskyist, that anarchists can agree with without ceasing to be anarchist, and so on. That means mainly solidarity work, points everyone can agree on.

So, what kind of organization is needed to establish this lowest common denominator on which the different political currents of the so-called new left can agree and on which they can organize common activity for an intervention in the class struggle? It is absolutely clear it must be a centrist organization. We do not accuse the international majority of wanting to build a centrist organization. But the only way to make this new mass vanguard an adequate instrument of the class struggle—while not recruiting them, not winning them, while the Maoists remain Maoists and so on—is for us to become a centrist pivot for this new left. On this point we agree absolutely with what a comrade of the French leadership wrote a little while ago: the decline of the PSU and all the centrist formations has created a vacuum which should not be filled by our organization.

The lowest common denominator on which we will win hegemony in the new mass vanguard will not be the Transitional Program. That's absolutely clear. If our intervention in the class struggle (with this new mass vanguard in which we have hegemony) were to be based on the Transitional Program, then first we would have to convince them. That means to win them over, to recruit them. That is not what the European document means.

From this comes a very big danger: that we do not act like a political fraction of the proletariat, but instead act

like a force whose task is to win political hegemony over more or less petty-bourgeois radicalized layers, social layers outside the proletariat, and then present ourselves to the proletariat as an outside force—in a sociological and not in a Leninist political sense. That gives a sociological deformation to the Leninist conception that the revolutionary program must be brought to the working class from the outside.

The result of this is that we do not share the opinion of the LTF that the European document is workerist. We think it is a false workerism or a pseudo-workerism; it is a proletarian orientation for students. This is shown absolutely clearly in chapter 12 of the European document where they write: "But in the present stage of recruiting these working class leaders is creating manifold problems in the revolutionary organization. These arise from the different levels of politicalization of these worker elements, activists coming out of the high school and university student movements; different life styles and levels of activity; different interests; etc."

That shows very clearly what a degenerated concept of revolutionary organization is behind this concept of the new mass vanguard: The students and so on bring such a style of life into our organization that workers could not really work and could not really live in our organization, and therefore we should not orient to them but should orient to this new mass vanguard.

The other point which is important is this: We must understand that the correct revolutionary program is not objectively necessary, for example, for Maoist students or spontaneist students, etc. Just through a special orientation to this so-called new mass vanguard we can not hope to convince them of the correctness of our program, because the correctness of our program can only be shown in the class struggle itself. A Maoist student can remain a Maoist until he is 80, that's clear. Perhaps he cannot remain a student until he is 80 but he can remain a Maoist till he is 80. That is totally different from the working class because in the working class itself, in the class struggle itself, the necessity of the Transitional Program is developing.

That leads to another point, the question of program. What role does the program play in the process of winning hegemony in the new mass vanguard? In chapter 6 of the European document they say: "The masses do not take their orientation in the first instance from programs, platforms or ideas. Their orientation is determined by their immediate needs. . . ." At the first glance the sentence is absolutely correct. If the working class has a problem in the class struggle they do not go to a bookstore and buy a program and look at what the program says. But what kind of program do the comrades have in mind when they write such a sentence? They mean the old Social Democratic maximum program.

The problem is just the opposite. What is a program that really corresponds to the immediate needs and to the aim of waging an effective struggle, etc.? And what is our responsibility? Our responsibility is to give just such a program to the working class, and that is the Transitional Program, which is not the Holy Bible, but which must always be redefined for every concrete situation in the class struggle itself.

With this easy trick—that the masses at first do not take their orientation from programs, platforms or ideas—with

this trick they put aside our programmatic responsibility; they put aside the real possibility to implant important elements of the Transitional Program, of the transitional method in the now developing process of radicalization and process of class struggle in the working class in Europe today.

We think that these comrades have a maximalist approach to the Transitional Program. They divide the Transitional Program again into a maximum program and a minimum program. On the one hand they say we shall intervene in the day-to-day struggles of the working class without giving any clear orientation for this, just supporting every demand, even reformist demands as they say; and on the other hand we have the Transitional Program in the sense of workers control and dual power. This is an absolutely maximum approach in the situation of class struggle we have now in most European countries.

The problem involved is what is propaganda and what is intervention in class struggle? The comrades of the majority, and that comes from the whole concept of winning hegemony in the more or less student-composed new mass vanguard, think that if you distribute leaflets that is propaganda; but if you organize a demonstration, that is an intervention in the class struggle. That is absolutely wrong. If you have a leaflet and on this leaflet you write "Solidarity with Renault," or if you organize a demonstration at the factory and the students then shout "Renault Workers Solidarity"—it is absolutely the same. The difference is not whether you move your fingers to distribute leaflets or move your feet to make a demonstration. In both cases it is propaganda, not intervention in the class struggle.

To intervene in the class struggle is to modify the process of radicalization, the process of class struggle, the process of the development of consciousness of the workers. If you do that then you really intervene in the class struggle. It is not a question of whether you do this by distributing leaflets or working within a factory or organizing a demonstration or whatever. So they are mixing up these two problems. It is absolutely clear that with the concept of the new mass vanguard, with their lowest common denominator for the new mass vanguard, which is mainly solidarity (the example of Lip is absolutely clear in this point) you of course do very good things (we are not against such solidarity actions); but you do not act as a political fraction of the working class itself and you do not modify the process of radicalization, the process of class struggle and class consciousness.

And given the situation we have today in Europe, if we do not have a wrong orientation toward this new mass vanguard but have a correct orientation toward the class struggle as it develops there are important openings for implanting central elements of the Transitional Program and the transitional method in the working class and the fights of the working class itself. It becomes more and more clear under the conditions we now have in Europe that the Transitional Program is the only program that is able to give answers for the class, show the way forward for the class struggle. These answers cannot be found in the old minimum program which is today the program of the trade-union bureaucracy.

Take one example—inflation. It is absolutely clear that if the workers in a trade union demand a 10 percent wage increase, they are not content. Why not? Nobody

can tell them today how much 10 percent is. If the rate of inflation is high, then 10 percent may perhaps be less than 8 percent, and so on. So the objective situation opens up big possibilities for our organization.

A real orientation to the struggles of the working class, to the crystallization of a new workers vanguard—which is not a proletarian component of the new mass vanguard, but the crystallization of a new workers vanguard on the level of the experiences of their class struggle, their experiences with the trade-union bureaucracy, their experiences with Social Democracy, etc.—if we do orient to that then in Europe we have the biggest possibility since World War II to begin to root our organization in the working class and to take a decisive step forward in building the revolutionary organization, which in the last analysis means the proletarian organization.

On the IEC Majority Draft Political Resolution

Comrade Charles has posed the question of a democratic discussion. I do not want to spend my few minutes here discussing this, but I will tell you, Comrade Charles, that we will continue this discussion when we are back in Europe. Then we will discuss the question of what your supporters did and do in the German section; how the international discussion was carried out in the ex-French section, where you handed out 13 documents to the rank-and-file at one branch meeting and asked them to read them in a few weeks so as to have in mind the international discussion; how the international discussion went in Italy where the discussion about Latin America has not yet started; and how the international discussion went in Belgium; etc.

I will not spend my time on this; but we will discuss this question of democratic discussion when we are back in Europe.

Now, the IMT seems to be very proud of their world perspective draft. I'm sorry, but our tendency has to pour some water into the wine. We do not think the draft is so fine. We think the draft on world perspectives should be based more concretely on the experiences of our own movement and our sections.

We disagree with the method of this document elaborated by the international majority tendency and it is exactly because we disagree with this method that we only offer some criticism.

In our opinion the world perspectives document of the international majority has three different parts.

The first part is very short, only a few lines. These lines say that the process of world revolution is going on, going on, going on and nothing ever can make it change.

The second part is by far the largest. We can characterize this as something like "around the world in 80 pages."

And then there is the third part, which has nothing to do with the first two parts. Suddenly a new mass vanguard comes out on a world scale. Now there is a problem with this: who is the new mass vanguard, for example, in the Soviet Union? Perhaps you can tell us in your summary. And for what class struggle in the Soviet Union can we make the new mass vanguard an adequate instrument?

You should be a little bit cautious to speak of a new

mass vanguard on a world scale.

We think that the world perspectives document of the IMT contains some confusions. One confusion is between the epoch, the period and the conjuncture. The epoch is correctly described by Trotsky as the epoch of capitalism in decline. The period is correctly defined by the world perspectives of the Ninth World Congress as a rise of the revolutionary struggle on the world scale. As for the conjuncture, our tendency would describe it as a certain ebb. There is a certain element of interruption in this rise of world revolution.

The world perspectives draft of the majority takes all three things together — the epoch, period and conjuncture — and says that capitalism is declining and the process of world revolution is rising. We think this is an insufficient method.

The world perspectives document of the majority also confuses the economic and the political conjuncture. In a very linear schematic way they say we will have an economic crisis there, and there, and there; and that will lead towards a political crisis; which will lead to a rise of the class struggle and so on. We deny such a concept of linear equation between these two points of economic crisis and deepening political crisis. I think this is especially true for the chapter on the United States where these two aspects — economic crisis and political crisis — are totally mixed up.

The draft also confuses the strategy and tactics of imperialism. They say that imperialism has changed its strategy. Now perhaps you can answer in your summary how the strategy of imperialism has changed. We would say imperialism has changed its tactics. The development of subimperialisms does not mean a new strategy. The strategy of imperialism was worked out after World War II, in 1948-49, and this strategy has not changed. What has changed are the tactics of world imperialism, not its strategy.

There is also a confusion between the role of the army and the role of the bourgeoisie which stands behind the army. The majority's world perspectives document only defines the role of subimperialism on a military level, according to the role of the army. Such different states as Brazil and Thailand, as Israel and South Africa are assigned a common role. Why? Because the armies in these countries play a role as a force in their imperialist sector.

We say that this is a kind of militarist deviation, because the political program of the bourgeoisie in these countries is different. And on that level you cannot compare, for example, Thailand or Brazil with Israel or South Africa.

The question of subimperialism is taken up in your document. That is very fine. It is an improvement compared to the document of the last world congress. But there is another point to mention, and that is the ques-

tion of the imperialist alliances. You totally lost that point by discovering subimperialism. Not one word about NATO, not one word in the world perspectives document about how to fight NATO.

Another point is that, as we say in Germany, we should not line our own boxes. That does not help anyone. When the majority world perspectives document speaks about Europe, it says that in Europe we had several prerevolutionary situations at several times. We know of only two situations which we could call prerevolutionary. One was May '68 in France and the other was Italy from August to November in 1969. That is all. So if you know of any more, perhaps you can tell us in your summary.

Your document gives a lot of examples where our sections have played a decisive role in the class struggle in Europe. Now, if we examine these examples perhaps we could find that it is true for France and perhaps it is true in an embryonic form for Britain. But can you tell us — here in the family — what was the decisive role of our Italian section (which is also mentioned in the world perspectives document) in any important class struggle in Italy? What important strike did they lead or something like this? I don't know about it. And the Italian comrades don't know about it either.

Now there is another sign of progress in this document. The document stresses the importance of the working class in Latin America. In the document of the last world congress the main role, the revolutionary role, was given to the peasantry. So it is very good to make some self-criticism. But you should not overdo it. You should not exclude the role of the peasantry for the whole colonial world, as you have done in your draft for this world congress.

In the world resolution of the last congress, three factors were cited as decisive for the rise of world revolution. Of these three, one remains, and a second remains in a changed form. That's all. The three factors were Castroism, Vietnam and the youth radicalization. Castroism is totally finished as a decisive force for the world revolution. Vietnam, as the world perspective document says, was a setback but it is still an important element. And the vanguard role of the youth has suddenly changed into the "new mass vanguard" as a political vanguard.

The resolution of the last world congress contained some central points which have disappeared from this new resolution, and no one wants to keep them, not even the international majority. The guerrillas have disappeared. Castroism has disappeared. The central revolutionary role of the peasantry has disappeared. The vanguard role of the youth has disappeared. And nobody wants to keep them.

And we really do hope that after this world congress and before the next, the strategy of armed struggle will also disappear as well as the worldwide new mass vanguard. We hope that nobody will want to keep them.

The New Vanguard with Mass Character: A Really Phenomenal Phenomenon

By Albert, Compass Tendency

[The following article is translated from internal discussion bulletin number 3, October 1973, of the Gruppe Internationale Marxisten, German section of the Fourth International.]

* * *

From a sociological point of view, the phenomenon consists of university and high school students, apprentices, and, to an increasing degree, young workers. (*IIDB* Vol. IX, No. 5, p. 13) Its specifically political characteristics are determined by the fact that it is:

a) outside the control of the traditional workers organizations (*IIDB* Vol. IX, No. 5, p. 10; Mintoff-thesis p. 4; open letter of IMT members to Compass, p. 3).

b) capable of being directly addressed and mobilized by communists (Mintoff-theses p. 4; open letter p. 3).

c) capable of intervening autonomously in the class struggle, taking political initiatives, and on occasion, leading workers' struggles of a mass character (*IIDB* Vol. IX, No. 5, p. 9).

These specific political characteristics of the phenomenon determine the vanguard character of its role in the class struggle (open letter to Compass, p. 3); its conceptual designation is therefore: "vanguard." Since this vanguard numbers in the tens if not hundreds of thousands, and therefore has a massive character, its designation must therefore be extended; it is a vanguard with mass character. It is not however identical with the workers vanguard or the revolutionary vanguard, which plays a central role in Lenin's theory of the development of the revolutionary subject. It is thus novel; it must be termed the *new vanguard with mass character*.

In order to avoid all misunderstandings which have accumulated so far in the discussion of the EPD [European Perspectives Document] and the perspectives of the GIM, we wish hereby to solemnly guarantee that we are not concerned with subjecting this new concept of the vanguard to an academically reified, scholastic or, even worse, dogmatic examination. Rather—in the words of a leading IMT representative—we are concerned with its *political substance*. If we have understood the matter correctly, the political substance of the EPD is crystallized in the following two points:

1. In the orientation to the working class, to its struggles and to its organizations. This flows from the analysis of the development of European capitalism and the perspective of crises which it entails. This orientation is to be concentrated on the goals and forms of struggle with elements of transitional content.

2. In the central task, namely, through the struggle for hegemony of the new vanguard, to structure the latter into an "adequate instrument" for intervention in the class struggle.

We will gladly give full and complete support to point 1, although we are a bit disturbed by the indolent and objectivist manner and way the theme of "forms and goals of struggle with elements of transitional content" is treated. How quickly this objectivism leads to fetishization of these things is demonstrated in Mintoff's thesis paper on page 3. There we read:

"The organization of this struggle (for qualitative and for transitional demands) will therefore only in *exceptional* cases be confined to plant organizations alone (in "closed shop" situations); rather strike committees, etc., will form. . . ." And further: ". . . there is no tradition in the West German [workers movement] of such organs, at least since the Second World War, but *they are essential and will necessarily come into being*."

But let us not pause longer on these weaknesses. It is much more important to test the logic of the points which constitute the political substance of the EPD, to test their political utility and correctness. What is this logic? Let us give the floor to a leading spokesperson of the IMT, Comrade Pierre Frank: "Our strategy is to seek out through our actions the slogans, the demands of the masses, that also have the greatest support in the vanguard [the new one, needless to say—the author] that are capable of leading to mass actions of the broad vanguard." ("Two Ways of Constructing the Revolutionary Marxist Party and Engaging It in Action," *IIDB* Vol. X, No. 14, p. 8.) I deeply beg your pardon, but I haven't the slightest idea of what this is supposed to mean. This sentence only tells me one thing. There's something not quite right about this New Vanguard. Otherwise why would it be necessary to choose slogans and demands of the masses which also have broad support in the vanguard? What kind of vanguard is this, whose needs are not identical with those of the masses? And above all, we must then ask, *what exactly is this New Vanguard the vanguard of?*

Spokespersons of the IMT will answer us that they never made a secret of the fact that this vanguard—aside from the common features noted above—is a sociological and political mishmash, for the EPD itself says that numerous elements of petty-bourgeois consciousness and petty-bourgeois ideology are to be found in it. It cannot be sociologically defined, but Comrade Germain tells us that this is completely unimportant because according to Lenin the vanguard is only defined politically. The reference to Lenin is correct of course, but we must remember that he was

talking about the *revolutionary vanguard*, the cadres of the revolutionary organization. But this is not what is meant when speaking about the New Vanguard. Therefore insofar as possible, you should be honest enough not to borrow definitions from traditional concepts. Confusion and misunderstandings are not the result of the ill-will of comrades, but above all of formulations, statements, and concepts with two or more meanings.

Let us return to the connection between points one and two, the substance of the EPD. When the LTF cannot quite understand what is so special about *this* vanguard and its restructuring to an adequate instrument in the class struggle; when it cannot understand why the orientation to the working class will flow from the struggle for hegemony in *this* vanguard; when it therefore concludes that the IMT is orienting in practice to *this* vanguard and not to the class, and thereby is practicing vanguardism, and following a two-stage theory, then the IMT pounds the table (concretely Comrade Germain at the Luxembourg Central Committee meeting): "We'll gladly put on this shoe; it fits very well!" Our ears prick up and we wait in the greatest suspense to see what comes next. And what comes next? An appeal to Lenin concerning the question of party building! As everyone knows, the revolutionaries can only win the masses when they have won the vanguard. What Comrade Germain omits here is once again no small matter. He does not mention that what Lenin was talking about was not the New Vanguard of the early seventies, but simply and plainly the *workers' vanguard*. Comrade Germain himself elaborated this very well in an article on Lenin and the problem of proletarian class consciousness, published in West Germany. It's clear: there is a system behind the trick of borrowing definitions. Sometimes it is the workers' vanguard, sometimes the revolutionary vanguard that bears the burden—in order to apologetically justify the importance of this "New Vanguard" phenomenon and the struggle for hegemony within it as a tactical orientation. We must be permitted to ask if the designation of this phenomenon as a vanguard is determined not so much by considerations of content as by considerations of how to legitimize it.

The whole dilemma of the IMT lies in the fact that it takes a very differentiated phenomenon, indulges in almost delusory wishful thinking about its possibilities and historical significance, and tries to sum it up in a *single* word. With *one* word, which enjoys historical legitimacy, in order to score points in the debate. In so doing this phenomenon is necessarily raised conceptually to such a high level of abstraction that it becomes almost impossible to determine concretely its function in the class struggle. The determination of its function must necessarily proceed in a similarly abstract manner. It is not necessary to repeat here the passage from Pierre Frank quoted above. The document cited there offers a entire bouquet of floral abstractions on the interrelation between workers struggles-New Vanguard-revolutionary Marxists. One example: "But what is involved is coming up with a strategy to use this vanguard [the new one—the author] *in actions*, around certain points of our program that would make the masses see through the experiences they are going through or that are made tangible for them, the superiority of our program over the reformists." (p. 8) And in the Mintoff-theses on the perspectives of the GIM it gets

even more bombastic:

"We must rather seek out the decisive elements in the development of the class struggle which permit us to effectively set into motion the portions of the vanguard which we can influence, either directly or through unity in action, in interventions at key points so that we can change the relationship of forces between us and the Maoists within the vanguard, as well as make headway in our own implantation in the advanced sectors of the working class."

We can certainly agree with Mintoff on the matter of the decisive elements in the development of the class struggle. But all this groping about at key points with the New Vanguard, and above all how this fumbling around is going to bring about implantation in the most advanced sectors of the working class—all that remains hidden in a thick fog of abstraction.

It is certainly justified to say that the IMT's unified conception of the orientation to the working class through the instrumentality of the New Vanguard exists only on a very high level of abstraction. And this level is not only high, but also clearly wrong. Otherwise there would be no explanation for the fact that at every attempt at concretization heated disputes break out within the IMT. Everyone grabs on to whatever aspect of the phenomenon appeals to him most—and of course the phenomenon has so many aspects—and begins to make his own sense out of it. (In passing: this fact will perhaps also help explain why a multi-colored spectrum of comrades have already been able to gather under the roof of the IMT in the GIM.) Everyone gets together again on the level of the most banal concretization—one moreover where the concept itself is missing: "*The phenomenon is a fact! And it has brought about a change in the political climate!*" We can also agree to this discovery without hesitation. We will even expressly emphasize that we are not going to get involved in a debate about whether or not it is a fact. The debate is not centered on this false dilemma, but rather on the question of what meaning the phenomenon has in the present period of the reconstruction of the workers' movement and thus in the construction of the party. What we have to say on this point can be found in Karl's paper on perspectives, points 2.2 and 2.4.

There are many sparkling theoretical constructs whose impact lasts only so long as you do not test their correspondence with reality or their usefulness in deducing a political orientation. When this is done, however, they quickly lose their sparkle.

The political substance of the EPD, which we summarized above, is no more than another of these constructs. "Orientation to the working class through struggle for the hegemony of the New Vanguard"—our whole national convention [January 1973] was impressed and raised their hands. Only after Mintoff presented his thesis-document did we see that behind this attractive formulation lay nothing more than the running inventory of the same old crap. With one small difference: now everything was justified in terms of an "orientation to the working class." Even the GIM's KPD campaign had to be hitched to this plough. [The GIM launched a campaign of solidarity with the KPD, a Maoist organization banned by the government after the KPD occupied the Bonn city hall. In the course of its campaign, the GIM defended not only the

KPD, but the occupation as well.] The comrades of the IMT point passionately to this campaign as an example of what they recommend for us in the future. Although we fully support this campaign, permit us to remark that we find it hard to make out how this campaign supported the workers' vanguard, or how it changed the relationship of forces in favor of the workers' vanguard, or how we were able through this campaign to implant ourselves in sectors of the most advanced workers. (This is how Mintoff describes the function of such campaigns.) The comrades of the IMT will reproach us for a lack of capacity for abstraction, for, as they will say, although the process was very indirect, it nonetheless had that effect in the final analysis. Of course, of course, is all one can say. But if we are always going to appeal only to this well-known "final analysis," then we might as well stop the discussion of our perspectives right now, and instead just proceed from the assumption that everyone will do their part for the liberation of the proletariat. In the KPD campaign the real issue was: "to take a principled position on a basic class question, at a moment when endless confusion reigned inside the socialist camp." (Compass answer to the GIM-IMT open letter.)

We must not omit drawing comrades' attention to an interesting aspect of the question. In the recent history of

our movement, sparkling theoretical constructs and conceptualizations that degenerated into scintillating metaphors have played an important role. I am referring to the concept of the "youth radicalization," and then the theory of the "dialectic of the sectors of intervention." Bidding adieu to these concepts gives rise to uneasy feelings. Following the annihilating criticisms of the "youth radicalization" the creators of this concept never made any serious critical examination of their handiwork. The concept was simply dropped. Things didn't go much better with the "dialectic of the sectors of intervention." Karl goes over this rigorous theoretical construct once more in his perspectives document; the creators of this concept however don't want to hear about it any more. Today they're baking smaller loaves. The real substance of this construct, as Comrade Germain taught us in Luxembourg, is this: to be able to recruit, through participation in youth struggles, in order to be in the position to take central initiatives in the class struggle.

What the IMT offers us today bears a fatal resemblance to what we are used to: a bombastic, sparkling theoretical construct, and in its center, a sparkling concept—more a metaphor than a concept. We must seriously ask the comrades of the IMT: Couldn't you please find us something more modest?

On the Compass Tendency's Critique of the European Perspectives Document—A Reply and a Request for Clarification of Differences

By E. Germain

[The following was translated from *Internationaler Rundbrief* No. 14, December 1973, the internal discussion bulletin of the Gruppe Internationaler Marxisten, German section of the Fourth International.]

* * *

The Compass Tendency's critique of the EPD as it has up to now been presented—proposed changes in the EPD (*IIDB* Vol. X, No. 25, December 1973) and Albert's article (p. 10 of this bulletin)—relates principally to the concept of the New Mass Vanguard. The most important modifications in the orientation of the European sections suggested by the Compass Tendency comrades, as against the orientation in the document accepted by the IEC, amount to calling into question the concept of the New Mass Vanguard and the social phenomenon it defines. Therefore, we will concentrate on this point in our reply to their critique. In this context it is superfluous to treat other questions more thoroughly, or to go into such suggested changes as numbers 2 and 4, which, with the small exception of the one concerning the essential nature of Social Democracy, hardly involve controversial material.

Is the Concept of the Political Vanguard Operative and Definable in Marxist Terms?

Basing ourselves on the two above-mentioned Compass critiques of the European document we conclude that the comrades of this tendency recognize only two "Marxist-Leninist" conceptions of the vanguard.

— the *politically* definable revolutionary vanguard, which corresponds to the cadres of the revolutionary organization—which at most can be extended to include its sympathizers;

— the *sociologically* definable worker-vanguard, which consists of the "organizers of workers' struggles" in factories and unions (i.e., the category "advanced workers," defined by Mandel in "Lenin and the Problem of Proletarian Class Consciousness." See Albert's article, p. 10 of this bulletin.)

If this very dogmatic—if you will pardon the expression—"clarification of the concept" were correct there would certainly be no place for the New Mass Vanguard described in the European document. The comrades of the Compass Tendency have given neither historical nor logical proofs for their schema. There are compelling arguments against this over-simplified dichotomy. Many times both Lenin and Trotsky used the concept "vanguard" in a *political* sense that did not fit either the category "revolu-

tionary Marxist cadre" or the concept of an actual "worker vanguard." Thus Lenin speaks of those who after August 4, 1914, rejected betrayal of the international class struggle—support for the imperialist war—as the "internationalist vanguard" of the socialist movement. Was this just a synonym for revolutionary Marxists, i.e., Leninists? Obviously not. This "political vanguard" differentiated itself either immediately or over a time into Leninists, left centrists, revolutionary syndicalists, anarchists, ultralefts, etc. It wouldn't occur to anyone to identify it with "the organizational cadres of the working class" (the number of factory workers among them initially was very small). Nevertheless, it was obviously a "vanguard" and it played a very decisive role in the history of the period from 1915 to 1921, among other things in the building and clarification of the Communist International, and had its beginnings at Zimmerwald.

In the years after 1933, Trotsky always spoke of his adherents as the "vanguard of the vanguard." What is the wider vanguard that is referred to here? Perhaps the "advanced workers"? Only in very few cases and for very short periods of time. Rather, here once again there is a political concept involved: all those who had drawn certain lessons from Hitler's victory, the threat of a new imperialist world war, the necessity of the revolutionary struggle of the working class—without having already necessarily decided for the Fourth International, the theory of permanent revolution, or for the Transitional Program.

The concept of a "political vanguard" can, however, also be logically-analytically determined. It corresponds exactly to the class relationships which result when the deep crisis of late capitalism (or imperialism) and the ascending swing of class struggles objectively drive them toward revolutionary program and revolutionary action. Due to this objective situation, the credibility of the reformist and neoreformist bureaucracies of the workers' movement drops rapidly. However, at the same time the revolutionary organization lacks credibility because of its weakness. Thus, while the broader radicalizing layers and groups, which will not "spontaneously" be able to "rediscover" revolutionary Marxism in its entirety, clearly separate themselves from their traditional bureaucracies, they do not coalesce immediately with the revolutionary organization. In other words, this vanguard is an expression of the *beginning* of the process of resolving the crisis of proletarian leadership under favorable conditions—a process that, however, *cannot in and of itself spontaneously resolve this crisis*. Hence, it is not just coincidental that the precedents cited were the years 1915 to 1921 and 1933-1937.

Two 'Worker-Vanguards'

Where then does the analytical mistake enter in trying to define the concept "vanguard" sociologically and not politically? As an objective sociological category, the "proletarian vanguard" consists precisely of the leaders in the plants who are *actually recognized by the class* ("the organizational cadres of the class").

For this reason, this category should not be described in a speculative manner but rather in a purely factual manner. If comrades are familiar with the situation in a particular plant, they can describe this "vanguard" with names and addresses. But the relationship of these actual "organizational cadres of the class" to class consciousness at its highest level (i.e., to revolutionary Marxism) is very uneven. This vanguard reflects the whole concrete history of the class struggle for the past fifteen to twenty years, and encompasses, to speak, both its strong and its weak points. It is quite possible, and often even probable, that the worker-vanguard *recognized* by the mass of coworkers in a factory, i.e., the worker-vanguard in the sociological sense of the term, is in no way identical to the most politically advanced workers, those most active politically on an ongoing basis, or even those workers who can be drawn into action.

However, a period of rising class struggles with a comparatively rapid radicalization of anticapitalist forces (in terms of goals and forms of struggle) is characterized by the fact that layers of differentiation in consciousness within the class begin to *change*. The schematic dichotomy made by the Compass comrades, which works with static concepts, in no way does justice to this *process of upswing* in class consciousness. For in this process the organizational cadres of the class sometimes change overnight as Trotsky so well described in his analysis of the June 1936 French general strike (see the quote from Trotsky from *Whither France?* cited by A. Duret in his article "Some Questions of Method Concerning the European Document," *IIDB* Vol. X, No. 18, October 1973, p. 23).

This means that in the course of the process of proletarian radicalization the politically advanced workers must first *win* the position of worker-vanguard and *become* the leaders of their class. For this reason it is precisely in a period of rising class struggles like the present one, that it is so fantastically difficult to orient toward a "sociologically definable" proletarian vanguard because this vanguard is *in the process of breaking up and changing the composition of its personnel*.

Numerous examples from the developments in Western Europe in recent years will make it clear how grave the consequences of a misestimation in this respect can be.

For the Lambertists during the decisive days of May 1968 an "orientation toward the organizational cadres of the working class" meant an orientation away from the barricades. But it was precisely the barricades that, through the transmission belt of the young and politically radicalizing workers, brought on the general strike.

An "orientation toward the organizational cadres of the working class" in most North European countries (including West Germany) means an orientation directed exclusively toward the trade-union opposition and the left trade-union tendencies. But there are already many cases in which "wildcat" strikes have been initiated and success-

fully carried through by workers other than the traditionally recognized leaders. And most importantly, there are significant cases in which elected strike committees have for a time created a new worker leadership.

An "orientation toward the organizational cadres of the working class" might mean acting the way the comrades of the Liga Comunista did during the automobile workers strike in Pamplona: contenting themselves with raising the proposal for a solidarity strike and propagandizing for this within the workers commission (the worker-vanguard). In our opinion, the ETA VI comrades acted in a more correct fashion. When they saw there was only a routinist and obstructive reaction to this proposal, they put organization of a solidarity strike in the hands of a politicalized "vanguard" in which they had very important influence. The general strike, launched in this way by the ranks, was successful and became a local general strike without having to wait for the traditional "worker vanguard" elements to reveal themselves as "tail-enders."

We are well aware that the comrades of the Compass Tendency do not in any way support Lambertist or tail-endist tactics. We only wish to point out to them the danger of the *ambiguity* of their "worker-vanguard" concept. This concept includes two different layers: the "advanced workers" in the sense of "organizational cadres" (i.e., the leadership of the class as recognized in the factory), and the workers who are radicalizing politically and striving toward independent class action.

The comrades of the Compass Tendency are themselves somewhat aware of the ambiguity of their "worker-vanguard" category when they characterize it in the following way in their proposed changes in the European document:

"Above all it is defined by its ability to lead struggles independently and construct 'substitute leaderships' on the plant level in opposition to the trade-union bureaucracies and has even constructed soviet-like organizations in those countries that are most advanced in a class-political sense. The new working-class forms of struggle they have initiated are the attempt to come to terms with the acute problems and contradictions of the present period of social and political crisis. They are introducing a deep-going revival of the workers movement. Their methods range from the active strike that breaks with the routine strike seen as extra vacation time . . . [to] genuine factory occupations." (*IIDB* Vol. X, No. 25, December 1973, p. 10.)

If we take the last sentence literally, then we would have to equate the "worker vanguard" with *the actual initiators and leaders* of the great European strike wave of the last five years, that is, with the "organizational cadres of the working class," the "actual" leadership of the workers in the plants. But in the European countries that have experienced the *biggest* strike battles, this leadership consists for the most part, if not almost exclusively, of the lower-ranking factory trade-union leaders: shop stewards, factory delegates, etc.

But if we compare the first sentence of the same quote ("substitute leaderships' . . . to soviet-like organizations") with the definition of the worker-vanguard in the proposed revision of that point in the European document ("objective anticapitalist and antibureaucratic consciousness," "the ability to do systematic class-political work"), this definition of worker-vanguard as the "advanced workers," the "actual organizational cadres of the working

class in the plants" no longer applies. For the overwhelming majority of the shop stewards and factory delegates, even those who have led gigantic strikes, *still* have no anticapitalist consciousness and are *still* not ready for the construction of "soviet-like organizations," and *still* do not have any capability for "systematic class-political work." Indeed, one could almost establish as an axiom that *no* revolutionary situation has appeared in recent years in a West European country, i.e., no real dual power situation, precisely *because* the "actual worker-vanguard" has not reached this state of consciousness.

On the other hand, the politically conscious and radicalized group of workers have not until now led larger strikes "by themselves" only on an exceptional and short-term basis (the last Fiat strike is perhaps the most important example but is only partially appropriate). It is not yet the recognized leadership of the class, it does not yet stand at the head of millions of proletarians.

The attempt to throw both categories into the same pot—the worker vanguard in the sociological sense and the category of radicalized and politicalized workers—in order to arrive at a sociological and non-political definition of the vanguard concept is thus indefensible on analytical grounds and unworkable in practice. We are not dealing here with the same group of people. In fact, the "actual worker-vanguard" (sociologically defined) does not even consist of a fixed group of people, rather at this very time it is gradually changing its composition. Two of the most important problems that must be solved historically are: first, the problem of the gradual transformation of the radicalized workers into a real worker-vanguard (which naturally requires a numerical growth of this category); and second, the development of their consciousness through assimilation of the revolutionary Marxist program. Construction of the mass revolutionary party and winning over the majority of the working masses through this party are tightly bound up with the solution of these two problems.

The Organizational Consequences of Conceptual Confusion

The European document does not attempt to conceal or gloss over the contradiction arising from the weakness of the revolutionary organization at a time when workers' struggles are already (to some extent stormily) on the rise, with meaningless phrases like those of the IEC minority (e.g., "There is no theory of party-building by stages." "We must take advantage of all opportunities." "Even on the eve of a general strike we cannot act in any other way than we are capable of acting on the basis of our numbers and program." "We are still propaganda groups everywhere." Etc.) Nor does it try to feign an "optimistic" solution which virtually *all* comrades are convinced is unrealistic, such as "Because our program and political line are correct, in the coming years we will become a party of hundreds of thousands if we rigorously intervene in the class struggle." Rather it attempts to solve the most difficult and most important problems of revolutionary politics, namely answering the questions: What is the decisive *next step forward*? What link in the chain can we grab hold of in order to roll out the whole chain with our given forces and the given dynamic of the class struggle?

The answer is: By transforming the European sections from propaganda groups *into revolutionary organizations* in the process of rooting themselves in the working class, and beginning to play a role in altering the relationship of forces between the radicalized layers of workers and the bureaucratic leadership of the workers' movement; something which will in turn lead to changing the relationship of forces between capital and the working class and, relatively speaking, brings closer the realization of our "central strategic project" for the present period—that is, not just to generalize struggles into an unlimited general strike, but to make this general strike culminate in the formation of organs of dual power (soviets), i.e., in the creation of a revolutionary situation. We will not deal further here with such platitudes as the fact that this requires, of course, a correct estimation of the objective dynamic of the class struggle and the relationship of forces within the workers' movement and a correct application of the Transitional Program, which in turn is marked by its own special characteristics in every country or group of countries in Europe, etc., etc.

Now, something astounding has happened to the Compass Tendency comrades. In their revision of section 6 of the European document they use the same formula to describe the next step:

"The stage that leads from the essentially propagandistic group to the revolutionary party in the scientific sense of the term, is therefore one in which a revolutionary organization begins to sink roots in the working class. . . ." (*Ibid.*, p. 11.)

The major portion of the argumentation on which the European document bases this "next step" is also included in the Compass Tendency's new draft: "The working masses do not take their orientation in the first instance from programs, platforms, or ideas. Their orientation is determined by their immediate needs and the tools for waging effective struggles that are available to meet these needs.

"Only when the revolutionary organizations have demonstrated not only the lucidity and correctness of their program but also their effectiveness in action, if only on a limited scale, will the disillusionment with the opportunism of the traditional leaderships and the revolts against it result in a massive influx into the revolutionary organizations." (*IIDB* Vol. X, No. 25, p. 11.)

But while the European document determines the *central organizational and political task* of the present period as a unified whole in coherent and logical fashion, the comrades of the Compass Tendency suddenly introduce a distinction between this "next step" (i.e., the central organizational task) and the "central political task," which they describe as follows: "The decisive task for the revolutionary organization in the present period is to continually increase our influence over portions of this worker-vanguard in accordance with our revolutionary strategy, to win them to our orientation and as a result to our organization." (*Ibid.*, p. 11.)

We know, however, that in the terminology of the Compass Tendency this "worker-vanguard" indicates two different layers. One is the "actual leaders of the class," shop stewards, etc. This layer, numbering in the tens of thousands, will obviously not be won *directly* to our organization, at best we can influence it. Do they therefore wish to make influencing this actual worker-vanguard the center of our organizations' activity? And, of course, it is cer-

tainly true, as the Compass comrades maintain, that this layer learns principally, if not exclusively, from the experiences of the class struggle they go through themselves. If so, then such an orientation leads paradoxically to very few, if any, workers being recruited, i.e., to "rooting in the working" class *not* taking place.

Indeed, the contradiction then becomes so great that the main hope must be placed on channeling *students* into the factories in order to be able to achieve even a minimal influence on strikes and wage battles from within (and not just from without by distributing leaflets in front of the plant gates).

If, on the other hand, rooting in the working class is not taken to mean influencing the already existing "actual" worker-vanguard, but rather "*recruitment of workers for the revolutionary organization*," then the winning over of individual, politicized, radicalized workers must be seen as a *special task*, along with the task of "influencing" the existing worker-vanguard. This follows from what has already been said regarding the different levels of consciousness between the "actual leadership of the workers" and the radical politicized workers who are already anti-capitalist. This latter group, however, does not learn solely from the experiences of the class in struggle, but through an individual learning process as well (political discussion and clarification in ongoing political activity). Thus it is not recruitable through the same forms of activity required for influencing the already-existing worker-vanguard.

Of course, not only is there no contradiction between the two tasks, but in fact they mutually complement each other in the process by which the revolutionary organization raises class consciousness and radicalizes the workers' struggles. We are only emphasizing the fact that the Compass comrades try in vain to lump together *two different* political tasks and not identical political tasks under an "orientation toward the worker-vanguard." How unclear they are on this point is shown by the fact that, on the one hand, they emphasize their agreement with Comrade Maitan's introductory document, but, on the other hand, have not included the *most important* paragraph in his document on the *concrete* road to "rooting in the working class" in their revision of the EPD, that is the paragraph that reads:

"... but in our view the first layers of workers who will come to the revolutionary party and may already be close to our organizations will be mostly if not almost exclusively workers who have not had the experience of the traditional parties or have gone through it very rapidly in the recent period. *One of the consequences is that it will be very difficult to win worker militants who are already complete political cadres, organizers of their class, at the moment they join.* We will be able to win workers who can play such a role partially, but who after joining the organization will have to develop not only their general theoretical and political education, but also their training as cadre who can intervene effectively in the mass movement, influence it, and carry out the tasks of leadership." (*IIDB* Vol. X, No. 21, pp. 18-19. Emphasis added.)

If this is true—and we hope the Compass comrades will not contest the fact—then the whole neat division between the method of winning the "worker-vanguard" and that of winning the "left forces" falls apart. It must be concluded then that it is a question of winning *individual* radicalized

workers to our entire program. But then the question arises, with what political methods and what *forms of intervention* is this kind of recruitment possible on a large scale? On this point the range of experience of a number of European sections is not inconsiderable. And it is not likely that West Germany will take or has already taken a completely different course of development in this respect.

Hardly any serious objection will be raised by anyone in the Fourth International to the contention that in the immediate future we will only be able to play a role in influencing the course of class struggles on a broad scale if we can exert an influence at least on the "actual worker-vanguard" from time to time and place to place. The fact that the construction of a *mass party* is not the next step, but the one after next is also something that no one will wish to dispute! Without such "thinking in stages" about party building there is absolutely nothing concrete that can be said about this vital question under the given conditions! It is also well known that only by organizationally winning the worker-vanguard that will exist at that time (which will already be very different from the present vanguard) to the revolutionary program of the Fourth International and by fusing it with the nucleus of the cadres of the Fourth International. [Sentence incomplete in German text—Tr.] But this still doesn't tell us that we can root ourselves in the class *at the present time*, or how we can make the first modest contributions to the political arming of the worker-vanguard (which among other things also can include changing the composition of its personnel).

This is where the Compass comrades' fatal error of substituting a sociological conception of the vanguard for a political one is revealed. *In practice*, they are forced to *separate the question of "influencing the worker-vanguard" from the question of party building*, because they know as well as we do that we will not be able to recruit hundreds of shop stewards, *Vertrauensleute, délégués, delegati*, etc., to our sections next year. They have nothing to add to compensate for this, except: stepped up recruitment in partial and peripheral sectors, "thereby increasing [the revolutionary Marxist organization's] forces for carrying out the central task . . . even before (a fine admission!) it is in a position to organize considerable (!) sections of the worker-vanguard" (*IIDB*, Vol. X, No. 25, December 1973, p. 11). To put it bluntly, in reality the sociological (i.e., unpolitical) approach to the problem of the "worker-vanguard" excludes immediate "rooting in the working class" through recruitment of workers.

In a Political Vanguard Recruitment Is Only Possible through Political Action

All of these difficulties are resolved, however, when we turn from the false definition of the *present-day* "worker-vanguard" as a sociologically definable category back to the correct definition in the European document, a definition that is entirely in the tradition of Lenin and Trotsky. Once it is understood that the radicalized workers who can be directly approached by the organization and won to its ranks (their numbers are definitely smaller in West Germany than in France, Italy, or Spain, but they are neither nonexistent nor unimportant) are the workers who are radicalizing, interested, and approachable on a

political basis, then it becomes clear that it is in practice completely appropriate to include such workers in the "broad mass vanguard" whether they make up 75, 50, or 25 percent of this mass vanguard. The decisive characteristic of these workers as far as party building is concerned, the very characteristic that makes them the most important area for recruitment to our sections at the present time, is the fact that they can be won to our complete program on a political basis, given two conditions: that the program and organization can prove themselves politically—that is, through intervening more effectively in the class struggle than the other left groups and the neo-reformists—and organizationally—which means the organization must prove its credibility to these vanguard workers through initiatives in action. These are also precisely the same basic conditions for recruiting in the "non-proletarian" sectors of the mass vanguard at the present time.

If one wishes to assert that at least in West Germany the "advanced workers" in the sociological meaning of the term in no way orient toward the same political concerns as the "mass vanguard," then this assertion is perhaps true to a great extent. But the only practical conclusion that can be drawn from this fact is that at the present time we can merely "influence" this milieu, not recruit from it. If, however, one tries to assert the same thing for radical workers who are already becoming political as individuals, it is simply not true.

In all Western European countries there is growing individual participation of radicalized workers in large-scale political actions (the Italian comrades estimate that several thousand factory workers took part in the European-wide Milan Vietnam demonstration). The Chile campaign now opening up on a European scale shows that a new phase in the politicalization of the "worker-vanguard" (in the political and sociological sense) is taking place, and that a qualitatively greater number of workers are taking part (or can take part) than in the Vietnam campaign.

We can only recruit these radicalized workers going through a process of politicalization if we:

1. carry out correct interventions in factory and union struggles;

2. prove ourselves politically superior to "competing groups" (including not just the Maoists and semi-Maoists but also the centrists, DKP [German Communist Party], and even to a certain extent the Jusos [Young Socialists]) through political campaigns outside the "plants and unions."

The ability to organize central political campaigns around issues that speak to and attract the "political worker-vanguard" (i.e., in reality, the proletarian component of the New Mass Vanguard) is at present the principal lever for direct recruitment of workers to our organizations. At least in most European sections, this is the preliminary balance sheet of the last two years; it is difficult to see why this should not be the case in West Germany. At the present stage this is the only way to concretely link together "rooting in the working class," "influencing class struggles," and "building the organization."

Of course, this means that the "central political campaigns" must be carefully selected and tuned not just to the objective requirements of the class struggle and the subjective needs of the "political worker-vanguard" but also to the organizational capabilities of our own or-

ganizations. Badly organized "central campaigns" that go up in smoke, that do not speak to the workers, have a result opposite to that desired: instead of making the organization attractive and credible in the eyes of politicalized workers, they make it seem undesirable and unworthy of confidence. Experience in several countries has already shown what sort of campaigns lead to the desired goal: central campaigns on certain anti-imperialist demands for which the worker-vanguard shows sensitivity (Vietnam, and, above all, Chile); certain antimilitarist campaigns (which speak directly to working youth and the sons of workers); campaigns against threats to trade-union freedom, for trade-union rights, and civil liberties (or for their extension), and in a broader sense, against the threatening consolidation of the "strong state"; solidarity campaigns with certain "exemplary" or important class-political strikes; campaigns for the rights of foreign workers, etc. The way such campaigns are organized and made to appear to the "public eye of the vanguard" also plays an important role in the development and consolidation of the organization's plausibility. (Considerations of this type include, for example: sharp rejection of all organizational sectarianism, the ability of our sections to practice genuine united front politics, avoidance of all types of anti-union or RGO-type phraseology—emphasizing goals and terminology shared by the class; at the same time, however, the ability to carry out successful initiatives in action and demonstrations in a militant form.)

The "Compass" Tendency comrades stress that recruiting even in nonproletarian sectors depends more and more upon a correct intervention in the workers' struggle. Of course there is no difference of opinion about this: this is, on the whole, one of the central theses of the European document, one which only the IEC minority sharply rejects. But this same thesis can also be turned around: recruiting the "proletarian" components of the New Mass Vanguard will depend on correct initiatives and interventions by our sections in the *political* struggle "outside the plants and trade unions." This apparent paradox is resolved as soon as it is understood that "orienting toward the working class" and "recruiting within the mass vanguard" are not a two-pronged, but a *single integrated* orientation. In order to be able to effectively intervene in ongoing class struggles we must gain the ability to intervene *politically* precisely *because of the dynamic of these class struggles*. This signifies the necessity for recruitment, the ability to win the best politicalized workers to our entire program, the ability to be seen as a political force within the vanguard, the ability to thereby complete interventions in the plants with political actions outside the plants (sometimes "mere" solidarity actions). The formation of a left trade-union tendency without the independent intervention of our organization leads at best to centrist, and not revolutionary Marxist advances in class consciousness. But even advances of this sort are and remain major prerequisites for the breakthrough to the proletarian revolution.

Two important errors contained in the amendments to the European document presented by the Compass comrades are very characteristic results of using an incorrect method in defining the concept of the vanguard. Firstly, the entire section of the European document dealing with the role of political campaigns in building the organization at the present stage is left out of their proposed

changes entirely although the practice of almost all European sections has shown that the overwhelming majority of recruitment takes place in the course of such campaigns. Secondly, the Compass Tendency comrades extend their fatal "objectivist" sociological method of approaching the question of party building in a basically apolitical way to the "nonproletarian" sectors we can reach (more exactly: to those other than actual factory workers). Thus in their suggested rewriting of point 6 of the European document:

"This does not mean that revolutionary Marxists will assume a parasitic attitude, concerning themselves only with recruitment from the partial sectors and partial movements from which this left force originates. Rather it is necessary to precisely define the social significance of these sectors and movements and their relationship to the struggle between wage labor and capital, and to work out and put forward concrete struggle perspectives for them that are derived from both of these aspects." (*Ibid.*, p. 11.)

Such a method would set us back years in university and high-school work by adopting what is essentially the Lambertist "theory" and practice of "representing the material interests of student youth." Developments in all of Europe have completely refuted this method of approaching the problem. The great successes we have achieved in the educational sector in the recent past, particularly the high-school mobilizations in Belgium and France at the beginning of 1973, were not won by "precisely defining the social significance of the high-school students" or "their relationship to the struggle between wage-labor and capital," but rather by *politically* articulating the needs of the radicalizing vanguard of these students (antimilitarism) and by displaying the organizational ability for effective initiatives in action.

This is not contradicted by the fact that material, immediate, demands can also give rise to struggles in the educational sector, and that we cannot turn up our noses at such immediate demands. But in contrast to the Mao-Stalinist method of "worker-student alliance politics" supported by pseudosociological (and in 99 cases out of 100, also scientifically false and non-Marxist) considerations, our method is that of grasping the *political* requirements of a radicalization of high school and university students brought about by the general social crisis of late capitalism, i.e., it is the same method with which we approach the problems of the politicalizing proletarian vanguard.

Politics, Like Nature, Abhors a Vacuum

In their unsuccessful attempt to declare the concept and, above all, the social phenomenon "political mass vanguard" "nonexistent," or to reduce it to the level of a "left force" emanating from the student movement, the Compass Tendency comrades avoid in practice providing the concrete political task for the organization at the present phase and its relationship to the necessary rooting in the working class. Here they unintentionally fall into dangerous *political* logic. The real, sociologically definable "worker-vanguard" is, in fact, by no means apolitical nor could it be in the midst of such a class-political situation as that described by the European document, and in a way accepted by the Compass comrades. In its overwhelming majority this worker-vanguard has

a political orientation — toward the traditional mass parties of the working class. In West Germany this means toward the SPD [Socialist Party of Germany] and to a small degree toward the DKP [German Communist Party].

The comrades of the Compass Tendency deny this with respect to the SPD (otherwise their rejection of the characterization of the SPD as a bourgeois workers' party would be meaningless), and approach this problem in an ordinary, idealistic way. Thus they cannot even formulate the problem correctly, let alone solve it. *Of course, sociologically* speaking the SPD is no longer a workers' party (even in the reformist sense of the term); but this is nothing new, it has been true for over half a century. *Of course* the advanced workers, who continue to vote for this party, have no illusions that they can bring about socialism in this way (or move closer to socialism). The disappearance of such illusions (which existed in the twenties, and outside of Germany as late as the thirties and forties) is one of the new aspects of the situation of the West European working class. But this is still far from proving that the "organizational cadres of the working class" in the plants and unions regard the SPD as simply an alternative *bourgeois* party (i.e., a party that stands aside from the class struggle or openly takes the side of the employers in the class struggle).

If this were true, then only two conclusions would be possible. Either this "worker-vanguard" has lost its elementary class consciousness, votes for the SPD the way American workers vote for the Democratic Party, because they don't (any longer) believe that workers must have a party of their own and in general separate "elections" and "politics" from the class struggle; or this "worker-vanguard" is itself so thoroughly bourgeoisified and integrated into the system that it *consciously* identifies its immediate material interests with those of a section of the bourgeoisie, that is, they vote for a bourgeois party because they feel that they are a part of the bourgeoisie.

Simply to formulate these two conditions is sufficient to show how absurd they are and how little they can be reconciled with any sort of definition of the layer in question as a "worker-vanguard" (shop stewards, etc.) be it ever so partial and limited. In actual fact the "natural leaders of the working class" do not regard the SPD as a wing of the bourgeoisie, but as an indirect political representative of the interests of the working class; a nonsocialist representative, one that is integrated into the bourgeois state and which partially maintains it (but which can also periodically be threatened by it!); a party of wage earners (or "those who must work") that opposes representatives of the employers' interests on immediate questions, even if inadequately and by trying to reconcile contradictions. If a historical analogy is necessary, then a very good one is the Australian Labour Party which Lenin characterized in similar fashion.

Whenever a central political conflict between the CDU [Christian Democratic Union] and the SPD arises, it is taken by the "worker-vanguard" to be a dispute between the employers and the wage earners. The reactions to the "Barzel coup," the politicalization during the last Bundestag elections, the discussions at the congress of the "employers' wing" of the SPD — indeed the entire political life of West Germany in general — can be understood in no other way.

What confuses the Compass comrades about this situation is one aspect of the objective-historical or ob-

jective social function of the SPD leadership. It is certainly a political "alternative leadership" for the bourgeois state and bourgeois society. But this has been true at least since 1918 and there is more to it than this. To conclude that the advanced workers are fully and completely aware of this, and that they stay with the party despite this state of affairs can only mean that the workers feel themselves to be "bourgeois" too, or are completely indifferent politically. Otherwise it would remain a mystery why this vanguard has not completely broken politically with the SPD.

Once this relationship of the working class (and *above all* of its real, sociologically definable vanguard) to the SPD is understood, then their ambivalent attitude during and after the most recent elections (analyzed in depth in Karl's document) can be completely explained. It was precisely *because* they saw the electoral victory of the SPD *not* as a victory of one "wing of the employers" but rather as a defeat for the employing class as such, that as a result of this electoral victory, the working class was strengthened as a class and spurred on to class action even in direct opposition to the Brandt government (and large portions of the trade-union bureaucracy). Seeing in the SPD a bourgeoisified and state-integrated party of wage earners and not an employers' party, by no means signifies identification with the practical politics of this party's leadership. On the contrary, the character of the stratum under investigation as a worker-vanguard is expressed precisely in this ambivalent, dialectical combination — essentially very like a Marxist analysis — of support to the SPD against the CDU and at the same time a sharp critical attitude (i.e., increased class consciousness, self-consciousness) toward the SPD leadership.

We do not wish to carry this analysis of the ambivalent attitude of the worker-vanguard toward the SPD any further here. We only wish to draw the conclusion that the sharper the class contradictions become, the more the rising trend of class struggles is established, the more class consciousness grows (starting from a *very low* level), the more the broad sociologically definable worker-vanguard becomes politicized, the sharper will be the process of differentiation, not only between the trade unions and the SPD (as well as within the trade unions — this is the first stage, which we are already going through) but also within the SPD. The whole history of the workers' movement confirms this and the recent past in many West European countries emphasises it again: it is unthinkable that broad masses of workers will radicalize and become political in struggle and that at the same time this process will bypass a party regarded by the majority of the workers as representing their interests, even if indirectly and ineffectually, leaving no trace of it behind.

Therefore we will make the following prognosis for the comrades of the Compass Tendency: an orientation toward the sociologically definable "broad worker-vanguard" which in the final analysis is nonpolitical (i.e., an economist orientation, and one combining economism with abstract propagandism) will come under increasing pressure in the coming months and years to turn into an orientation toward the SPD (i.e., into a new edition of entryism). Politics, like nature, abhors a vacuum. If we neglect the political dimension of the vanguard concept today, we will pay an "entryist" price tomorrow.

We cannot escape the impression that the convulsive

efforts of the Compass Tendency comrades to combine their "course toward the worker-vanguard" with a revision of the definition of the SPD as a bourgeois workers' party is nothing but a conscious or unconscious effort to erect the necessary barriers today so that tomorrow a somewhat more durable and effective resistance can be put up against this unavoidable pressure. This will prove a not very effective maneuver should the organization actually sacrifice its emphasis on the political method of determining its tasks in favor of Compass's "vanguard conception."

This in no way indicates that at the present stage the orientation toward building the revolutionary organization on the basis of independent activity, initiatives, and cadre accumulation should imply an attitude of indifference toward developments within the SPD. On the contrary. Section 14 of the European document says the following about this matter:

"The role of pivot that the revolutionary Marxists are seeking to play between the new far left and the organized workers' movement by no means represents a centrist scheme of balancing on electoral combinations or interbureaucratic agreements, as the PSU and PSIUP have done. To the contrary, it represents a profound understanding of the dialectical interrelationship that dominates the whole present phase: the interaction through manifold intermediary stages between a mass vanguard forming and going into action, and radicalization in the traditional organizations (a classical example in this regard is what has been happening in Great Britain since the start of the struggle against the Tories' antistrike bill). While we are convinced that the Social Democratic, Stalinist, and trade-union bureaucracies remain an essential roadblock on the path to the socialist revolution, a roadblock that must be shattered, as the workers' struggles broaden and radicalize, by the pressure of rising class consciousness and the strengthening of the revolutionary-Marxist organizations. We are equally convinced that no revolutionary party will see the light of day, that no generalized system of dual power bodies can arise from these struggles, without mass currents breaking off from the traditional leaderships on the basis of their own experience. The precise tactic the revolutionary Marxists adopt toward the organized workers' movement, of whose correctness they try to convince broader sections of the new far-left vanguard, has the objective of stimulating, of facilitating, and of politically orienting this polarization and splitting-off process." (*IIDB*, Vol. IX, No. 5, November 1972, p. 21.)

Only such a carefully balanced position as this constitutes an effective alternative to renewed entryist temptation while advancing both party building and rooting in the working class. The Compass Tendency comrades have not suggested removing the above-quoted passage from the European document. But with their basically nonpolitical orientation toward the "worker-vanguard" as well as their fundamentally false estimation of the class nature of the SPD, they have removed any concrete basis for this alternative. In the long run, they stand to get nothing for their pains but their troubles, i.e., a new entry (just as the IKD comrades have done objectively) when reality collides none too gently with a false prognosis and false orientation.

It has now become clearer to us how all of the points in the orientation of the European document fit together

like cogs on a gear and how the Compass comrades' arbitrary removal of some of these cogs threatens to paralyze the entire mechanism.

The current significant rise of workers' struggles affecting all of Europe, which, in the last analysis, is only the expression of the general social crisis of late capitalism reproduced and exacerbated on a higher level, leads of necessity to a tendential shift in the political life, in the political class struggle of the workers' movement, and the conditions under which the new revolutionary party can be built—although the tempo and scope may vary from country to country. The sharpening of class struggles leads to an uneven process of politicalization: a general, slow, contradictory politicalization of the broad working class (including the majority of its "organizational cadres" in the plants and trade unions), which takes place principally in the traditional workers' parties (or is directed toward them); the forming of a new layer of politically radicalized workers, who for the most part do not lead any really sizable number of workers for any length of time, but who can claim such leadership from time to time.

In the immediate future, because of the existing relationship of forces and the lack of our sections' credibility in the eyes of broader masses (also "advanced workers") we cannot hope to win the former category to our organizations. However, we can and must attempt to increasingly influence them with the Transitional Program. On the other hand, we can by all means recruit from the second category and thereby gain a direct foothold in the plants and trade unions, on the condition that we see intervention in the real, ongoing class struggle as the principal task of the organization; that we carry out such an intervention in practice with a line that proves itself superior (i.e., correct and effective) to that of the other left organizations, and that we combine this intervention with general political activity based on carefully selected political campaigns, through which we will win credibility as an organization in the eyes of the worker and student vanguard. These campaigns also play an important role in the political centralization and unification of our own organization.

The more our own organization recruits and accumulates cadres, the greater the number of strikes, labor conflicts, and trade-union disputes in which it effectively intervenes from within and supports and protracts from without through political intervention, the more will the step-by-step rooting in the working class be accompanied by a growing influence on the "organizational cadres" of the class, i.e., by our beginning to influence real class struggles. The more the political weight of the organization

within the mass vanguard grows, the more the central campaigns it can conceive and carry out lose their incidental, local, and regional character; the more the organization will become a political factor (even if a very modest one) in the class struggle on a national scale, and combined with this, the more its credibility will grow in the eyes of broader "natural vanguard layers" within the working class. Not only through our intervention in the dock workers' strike in Gent and Antwerp but also through our Chile campaign for the first time we have succeeded in the Flemish part of Belgium, if only to a limited extent, in establishing a real dialogue *as a political organization* with the sociologically definable worker-vanguard in the Belgian ports. Such a possibility for dialogue stands on a qualitatively higher level than the limited economist-syndicalist influence that individual members or sympathizers of the organization could win in their capacity as shop stewards or trade-union leaders. And the more the political weight of our organization grows, the more it influences the broad mass vanguard, and this vanguard gives up its sectarian attitude toward the mass organizations; so much the more will the process of differentiation within the SPD be driven forward.

We will only be able to influence the course of class struggles toward its climax in a general collision between wage-labor and capital in such a way that organs of dual power—i.e., a revolutionary situation—will arise, if *all* elements of this orientation in the European document work together. This is concretely expressed in the formulation "orientation toward workers' struggles and winning hegemony in the new mass vanguard." If anyone is unhappy with this formulation, it can easily be replaced with another. This attempt to clarify the differences with the Compass comrades has, hopefully, pointed out what practical, political, and organizational content is really involved. This does not have much to do with "precise definition of terms" but it does have to do with a correct determination of the objective priorities within the framework of the unfolding class struggle and of the actual priorities in party building.

15 November 1973

Note: At the membership meeting of the IT in Braunschweig on November 25, 1973, it was decided to include this document among the line documents of the tendency, agreement with the *general line* of which is the basis for membership in the tendency.

Against the Danger of Reducing Our Present Task to Political Propaganda

The Compass Tendency's Position on Comrade Germain's Critique

[The following was translated from *Internationaler Rundbrief* No. 14, December 1973, the internal discussion bulletin of the Gruppe Internationale Marxisten, German section of the Fourth International.]

* * *

Admittedly, the Compass Tendency's "Draft for Revision of the European Perspectives Document" confronts the comrades of the organization with a number of political and practical problems.

The practical problems are related to the form of the draft itself, its lack of accessibility obliging comrades to look up the sections of the EPD for which revisions are suggested and piece together their own picture of the continuity, a task so laborious that even Comrade Germain in one instance makes the mistake of citing a passage as one that we wished to retain when actually we suggested deleting it. Of course, a better perspective would have been provided by preparing a synopsis with the original text and the suggested changes running side by side. This was not possible for lack of time and space. Nevertheless, we hope the comrades will not shun the necessary effort.

The political problem results from the method we have used—concentrating our proposed changes on particular points and leaving considerable parts of the EPD unchanged—a procedure that immediately leaves itself open to the charge of eclecticism.

However, we take as our point of departure the fact that internal differences in an organization are not the same thing as differences between separate, distinct organizations. So our method, as unacceptable as it would be for a programmatic discussion between ourselves and another left organization, can be used in a discussion within the Fourth International if certain conditions require it. These conditions are the following:

1. We consider it unacceptable to reject the "European document" in its entirety for the reasons set forth in the introduction to our resolution (*IIDB*, Vol. X, No. 25, December 1973). However, we cannot vote for the EPD as it stands.

2. We had to limit our proposed changes to the points we considered essential because we had to submit our document quickly because we were unaware of the formal deadline (we can share responsibility for this with the international center).

The necessarily limited character of our resolution was emphasized in the introduction, point 5:

"The changes we suggest as alternatives to sections of the present draft of the EPD are limited to those points in the draft we disagree with, and remain within the framework of the draft itself. That is, they do not deal with all the weaknesses that, in our opinion, the draft as a whole contains. The task of producing a completely new document, more mature in all respects, will once again fall

to the international leadership at the proper time. It is not a task that can be performed by a tendency in a single section." ("Draft for Revision of the European Perspectives Document . . .," *IIDB*, Vol. X, No. 25, December 1973.)

Comrade Germain uses a splendid metaphor for the European document: "It has now become clearer to us how all the points in the orientation of the European document fit together like cogs on a gear, and how the Compass comrades' arbitrary removal of some of these cogs threatens to paralyze the entire mechanism."

If, in Germain's opinion, the critique of the vague "New Mass Vanguard" concept makes the whole EPD useless, then it seems to us that one is all but forced to conclude that the EPD in its original form is extremely one-sided. This suggests another less splendid metaphor for the EPD: about the pot and the lid.

The pot: The EPD's analysis of the development of European capitalism including the crisis perspective and the central role the rise of workers' struggles plays in this analysis and perspective.

The lid: The struggle for hegemony in the "New Mass Vanguard" in order to transform it into an "adequate instrument" for intervention in the class struggle.

The pot is sturdy and round. There is little difference of opinion about this. But the lid doesn't fit. It is not round but elliptical. Hence it only partially covers the pot and in some places hangs over the rim. If you try to lift the pot, the lid slides off.

Since we cannot fashion a new lid so quickly and we do not share the LTF opinion that the pot doesn't need a lid, we altered the lid to make it fit better. The result cannot be more impressive than the operation.

The method Comrade Germain uses to come to grips with the Compass Tendency draft goes something like this: If the Compass Tendency orients only toward the worker-vanguard, if it equates this vanguard with the traditional "organizational cadres of the working class," if it defines this vanguard in a purely sociological (?) fashion and looks at it in a static way while at the same time denying all other possibilities for intervention and recruitment; if it will end up making no gains, it will orient toward the SPD considering entryism the only possible tactic (as obviously does Comrade Germain). Ergo: The objective logic of their position is leading the Compass Tendency into a "new edition" of entryism in the SPD.

We don't wish to delve further into this peculiar methodology. But if Comrade Germain is going to cite the new entryism of the former IKD comrades as proof of his "prognosis" then it should be mentioned that the same Germain once held a rather different prognosis for that very same IKD: the "relentless dialectic the IKD is now subjected to" will lead to "its successfully breaking Juan Posadas' world record for creating the smallest mini-international." (*Die Internationale*, March-April 1971.)

Prognoses like that can be tricky.

Instead, we would like to try to sketch a line of argumentation taking up our substantive disagreements with Germain's latest document—something which may possibly be useful for clarifying the positions.

1. Is the 'New Mass Vanguard' Operative and Politically Definable?

Comrade Germain asks: "Is the concept of the political vanguard operative and definable in Marxist terms?" He thus takes for granted that the EPD's "New Mass Vanguard" is exclusively a politically defined and politically definable vanguard. The positions of the IMT as a whole are not so unequivocal. In the EPD itself the criteria for the "NMV" are: overwhelmingly young, largely from petty-bourgeois background, capable of independent initiatives, and outside the control of the traditional bureaucratic organizations. Only the last criterion is a political one, and a vague one at that. What about a student from a bourgeois background who has hardly had the chance to come under the control of the CP, SP, or the trade-union bureaucracy, and who would have to make a conscious political decision to subordinate himself to this control. And what about an industrial worker who is practically "born into" this control. Elsewhere the "NMV" is called a "social vanguard with mass influence and a mass character," as when Duret says that in Italy after five years of class struggle ". . . in the way the student component and the working-class component of the vanguard with a mass character interact has changed" ("Some Questions of Method Concerning the European Document," *IIDB*, Vol. X, No. 18, p. 23). With a real *political* vanguard we would speak of a change in the way the vanguard and the class interact and not of a change in the way different *social* components of the vanguard interact. Even Germain in his new document is not free of ambiguity on this point. On page 18 he speaks of the "social phenomenon 'political mass vanguard'," and on page 13 he says the concept of a political vanguard "corresponds exactly to the class relationships which result when the deep crisis of late capitalism (or imperialism) and the ascending swing of class struggles objectively drive them toward revolutionary program and revolutionary action," whatever this confused formulation may mean. Obviously, in the documents by IMT authors political, social, and momentary-functional definitions of the "NMV" are mixed together. This is explained away as irrelevant because the most important thing is to understand the role and the dynamic of the "NMV." But even this approach is blocked by their method. Two examples are typical:

On page 20, Germain writes that the broad *mass* vanguard has to give up its "sectarian attitude toward the *mass* organizations . . ." (our emphasis). Is there a contradiction in the masses or is the vanguard not a vanguard? The problem is that the "NMV" allows no intelligent distinction between a vanguard and a movement, nor between a political vanguard and a momentary vanguard role.

The second example: The EPD gives as the task for our sections: "organizing national political campaigns on carefully chosen issues that correspond to the concerns of the vanguard, [and] do not run against the current of

mass struggles . . ." (*IIDB*, Vol. IX, No. 5, p. 24). And Pierre Frank on this subject: "Let's move to the reproach that is made of our orienting ourselves to the 'concerns' of the vanguard in opposition to the needs of the masses. We have never created such a counterposition for the simple reason that the 'concerns' of the vanguard are the needs of the masses" (*IIDB*, Vol. X, No. 14, August 1973, p. 8). Contrast Duret, representing the same IMT: ". . . in order to eliminate any misunderstanding, it is necessary to state that we do not deny the possibility of an *occasional counterposition* between the *concerns* of the vanguard and the *objective needs* of the masses" (original emphasis) ("Some Questions of Method Concerning the European Document," *IIDB*, Vol. X, No. 18, p. 25).

The misunderstandings will no doubt persist for some time.

There was a time when Comrade Germain still understood very well the differences between political vanguard, worker-vanguard, and politicalized left forces:

"Through the strengthening of the revolutionary organization the students can make a significant contribution to the gathering of this new proletarian vanguard."

"If on the other hand, one preaches to the students to 'wait' until they can 'subordinate' themselves to an as yet nonexistent proletarian vanguard (instead of calling upon them to make an important contribution to the gathering together of this proletarian vanguard) then this whole important political potential will be lost."

"The Leninist solution to the problem is, therefore . . . to use the potential of the revolutionary student movement for strengthening the organized revolutionary vanguard." (All quotations from *Die Internationale*, March-April 1971.)

It seems the problem no longer exists. The new proletarian vanguard, the potential of the anticapitalist movements, and the organized revolutionary vanguard are all happily united in the "New Mass Vanguard," which, according to Germain, is a "political vanguard, operative and definable in Marxist terms."

2. On the Question of the Political Vanguard Outside the Sphere of Production

If there is a revolutionary organization already capable of making good its claim to be the political vanguard by actually rooting the revolutionary Marxist program in considerable sections of the working class, then it is easy to answer the question of who will play the role of political vanguard in the broad sense. Both the qualitative (the political-programmatic totality) and the quantitative (the degree of practical rooting in the masses) aspects of this matter are important criteria for determining the answer.

If, however, there are many organizational nuclei, all representing more or less revolutionary positions, and—in the degree to which they are rooted in the masses—the first stages of campaigning for proletarian class leadership; this question cannot be answered so unequivocally: such organizations can play a momentary vanguard role through particular initiatives around individual political questions, yet on other relevant questions of concrete politics they can veer off in a sectarian or opportunist direction. This momentary vanguard role, which can be played by Maoists and spontaneists too, has absolutely nothing

in common with the political vanguard as defined by Lenin. On this point we are indeed "dogmatic" and "orthodox" in comparison to the International Majority Tendency's inflated conceptions. They can compress these diverse organizations and the forces they can mobilize into a definite, unified "political vanguard" only because they employ an extremely vague and abstract formulation, namely—"anticapitalist and antibureaucratic" consciousness and capability for "independent initiatives." At this point, we won't even ask *how* this diffuse consciousness will be expressed at the level of concrete politics, or what character these independent initiatives have and how they are to be evaluated in the context of the overall theory and practice of these organizations. Those who, like Germain, start from a very general level in defining the concept "political vanguard" and, in the process, lose sight of the concrete means and partial goals of this "vanguard," and whether they are *functional* for rooting the revolutionary Marxist program in the working class, must of necessity come to highly generalized conclusions.

This is made clear by the example Germain himself introduced into the discussion. According to him, after August 4, 1914, there existed an "internationalist vanguard" around the question of opposing the imperialist war. To be sure, this vanguard was then differentiated into centrists, anarchists, ultraleftists, Leninists, etc. This example proves just the opposite of what it is supposed to prove: on one single—and of course, very important—question, tendencies which otherwise had rather different attitudes toward revolutionary Marxism, took a *relatively* correct position. Relatively, because as soon as the question of politically concretizing their opposition to the imperialist war arose, they had a parting of minds and divided into pacifists and revolutionaries. Yet without a doubt, in their principled position on the imperialist war, they played a vanguard role—although only in this respect. Undoubtedly Lenin never hesitated to make alliances on concrete questions—even with centrists when their political position permitted it. But it never would have occurred to him to view them as *the* political vanguard for that reason. For he was very well aware that this constellation can change fundamentally around the next political problem that arises, that indeed it must change, unless one wishes to imply that centrists lose their centrist character. We too are for cooperation with other currents on those concrete questions where this is actually possible—without creating illusions about the *general character* of these currents.

Thus Germain always uses the category "political vanguard" whenever he is speaking about a totally *abstract and general* layer of people who have broken with capitalism and the bureaucratic leaderships. On the other hand, he uses it in an empirical-functional way in a *particular* concrete question. In the first case, consciousness and practice are regarded independently of their concrete application. In the second case, consciousness and practice are dissected into numerous little details without relation to one another. Both of these are, in our opinion, methodological errors that can only be understood as the consequence of an apologetic attitude toward the EPD and its conceptual constructs.

What exactly is this phenomenon, erroneously described as a "political vanguard"—insofar as it is to be found

outside the sphere of production? Three different layers can be determined analytically, although, to be sure, they are actually interwoven to a considerable extent and partially dependent on one another:

a) The layer formed by those sectors that result from specific changes in the general crisis characteristic to late capitalism in specific spheres outside the sphere of production, sectors whose importance within the framework of society as a whole has increased. To be included in the same group are those sectors that are subject to a special oppressive situation or to a particular segment of the social reality of capitalist contradictions. As long as the acute crisis of proletarian leadership remains unresolved, these sectors are threatened on the one hand, by integration along reformist lines, and on the other, by degeneration to the point where they represent particular interests. However, they are potentially in a position—and this is not least of all dependent on the role of revolutionary Marxists—to attain relatively deep anticapitalist consciousness. To this extent, they represent important fields for intervention for all those incipient organizations that are striving to resolve this leadership crisis. In the process of this intervention, however, a clear distinction must be made between those who can be mobilized in a struggle for definite demands on the basis of their concrete experiences, and those who intervene in these movements with an anticapitalist (as distinguished from reformist) perspective.

b) The layer of revolutionary organizations and embryonic organizations that are trying to provide an answer to the social crisis of capitalism. In addition to their general orientation toward the working class, this layer intervenes in the above-mentioned movements with the object of giving them an anticapitalist thrust and, in the process, strengthening their own organizations.

c) The layer that becomes involved in political campaigns, which have an essentially conjunctural character. In West Germany, at least, it turns out that 95 percent of the forces mobilized in such campaigns are an overlap from parts (a) and (b). It is the left organizations, of course, that represent the organizing and initiating element that can mobilize the most politicalized sections of (a) around well-defined perspectives.

So what orientation does Comrade Germain suggest for winning over these left forces outside of the sphere of production? In his document, two lines stand out rather clearly:

a) He accepts an "orientation toward the working class" that, in his interpretation to be sure, is largely identical to a special orientation toward the "radicalized workers" (whom he sharply differentiates from the "organizational cadres of the class"). We will go into this concept and its analytical presuppositions later.

b) He sharply rejects our position of developing a concept that, on the one hand, takes as its point of departure the material conditions of these layers that lie outside the productive sector and the changes they are going through; and, on the other, attempts to promote demands that lead to a political link with the struggle of the proletariat. He regards this as the mortal sin of Lambertism—"representing the material interests of student youth."

We readily confess this "sin," although not in the trivial sense in which Germain would like to characterize it. Since he regards the "New Mass Vanguard" only as an ideol-

ogical product, he completely loses sight of what material processes took place—particularly in the educational sector—before their ideological reflection appeared indirectly through the student struggles. For reading material on this problem, we can especially recommend to him the writings of Comrade Mandel. From the fact that we try to arrive at definite, concrete perspectives of struggle for this sector on the basis of an analysis of the educational system, and within these perspectives attempt to reconcile the objective needs of the working class with the conditions of the educational system (this and nothing more is meant by the formulation "coordination with the class struggle"), Germain infers that this is an infusion of Maoist-Stalinist "worker-student alliance" (*Bündnis*) politics. This indigestible amalgam comes from a diminished understanding of what "politics" is. Our efforts to provide an answer to the problems posed by these partial sectors, and thereby to advance the movements issuing from them, is obviously not up to the level of "politics." The counterexample Germain gives reveals the emptiness of his argumentation: the antimilitarist student mobilizations at the beginning of 1973 in France (Debre law) and Belgium obviously had nothing to do with the "material interests" of those involved; rather the "needs" whose political articulation Germain praises presumably sprang from a sudden mass reading of Liebknecht's speeches.

No one disputes the fact that general political campaigns must also be carried out in the universities (and this is what Germain's concept of "political" comes down to). But making this the sole axis of our work means reducing the struggle to a purely ideological level (a struggle only for minds as minds); and secondly, it means establishing an incorrect relationship between political campaigns and political rank-and-file work. This comes very close to the "parasitic attitude of mere recruitment," which we assail. It would mean that in our confrontation with other political groups, we would once again have only general bits of Trotskyist wisdom to offer, instead of concrete answers to concrete questions. We carry out political campaigns because of objective requirements, not as ends in themselves in order to create an artificial opportunity for recruitment. We don't carry them out *in order to* achieve a shift in the relationship of forces on the left; we achieve such a shift when we can provide a *correct* answer to an objective problem with our campaigns. A contrived orientation toward a synthetic vanguard doesn't change this at all.

But this alone is not enough, and we agree with Comrade Germain that "recruitment even in nonproletarian sectors will increasingly depend on a correct intervention in workers' struggles." Therefore it is of the highest importance to examine the exposition on this point in his document.

3. On the Question of the 'Political Vanguard' in The Sphere of Production

The analytical method Comrade Germain uses to approach the problem of the new worker-vanguard can be quickly summarized in passing: he attributes to the Compass Tendency an *orientation toward a worker-vanguard that can only be defined sociologically* so that he can then proceed to cut this concept to pieces. But the Compass Tendency does not hold such an orientation. Nor has it

ever maintained that such a purely sociological vanguard even *exists*—a fact that is, moreover, made clear from the sections of the "Draft for Revision of the EPD" that Germain himself quotes. The only quote that he gives as proof for his thesis (Albert's contribution, in this bulletin, p. 10) contains nothing of the sort, and here Germain does not quote verbatim.

Following his exposition further, our astonishment does not cease; at least with respect to analysis, Comrade Germain maintains in his document that it is possible to define a worker-vanguard *on purely sociological grounds*, but immediately advises against orienting toward it. On the one hand, this shows that he makes the same analytical error he would like to ascribe to us. On the other, it shows that he has an incorrect approach toward the problem of the new vanguard that has proved itself as such in the workers' struggles of recent years.

But the confusion is far from over: "As an objective sociological category, the 'proletarian vanguard' consists precisely of the leaders in the plants who are *actually recognized by the class* ('the organizational cadres of the class'); ". . . traditional 'worker-vanguard'; ". . . the 'advanced workers' in the sense of 'organizational cadres'; "the actual (!) worker-vanguard"; "But in the European countries that have experienced the *largest* strike battles, this leadership [the worker-vanguard] consists for the most part, if not almost exclusively, of the lower-ranking factory trade-union leaders: shop stewards, factory delegates, etc." This is only a small harvest of the possible definitions for a worker-vanguard defined in purely sociological terms. Let's try to shed some light on the problem.

If this worker-vanguard can be sociologically categorized, what are the structural characteristics that distinguish it from the class as a whole? We can surmise that perhaps Germain has in mind the related fields of "organizational sociology" (of the trade unions) and "industrial sociology" (the study of formal and informal structures and communications among employees).

The answer to this last question leads us straight to the heart of the contradictions in Germain's line of reasoning. You see, we cannot separate the definition of *vanguard* from *differences in consciousness*, and these cannot be arrived at sociologically. The whole operation only makes sense if you wish to establish a *structural* difference between the "actual worker-vanguard" (which has influence with the workers but is not yet really radicalized) and a "political vanguard" of "radicalized workers" (which is not the "actual" worker-vanguard, but is interested in Vietnam and Chile). If we equate "worker-vanguard" with the sociological organization of the trade union, then there is *no sense at all* in our talking about the reconstruction of the workers movement and the formation of a new worker-vanguard (which is closely related to the renovation and extension of these trade-union structures).

The new worker-vanguard, which really exists in practice, is distinguished by the very fact that it leads the class struggle with such consistency that it tends toward friction with the trade-union bureaucracy and toward independent leadership of struggles.

This does not mean that it has already broken with the bureaucracy *in a conscious political manner*, nor that it is a sociologically definable layer.

Here it is quite obvious that these trade-union structures in the plants have *a priori* nothing to do with the new

worker-vanguard we defined. In a concrete class-struggle situation, such a convergence can come about. But it does not *necessarily* have to happen, since a whole series of factors come into play.

As Germain, contradicting himself, explains further on, the newly formed worker-vanguard is not a fixed and unchanging phenomenon. It is instead characterized at times by a rapidly changing composition, and it also suffers regressions in consciousness from time to time (especially after demoralizing defeats). At other times it makes leaps forward, which in turn can find expression in the trade unions (left trade-union tendencies). Anyone who believes today that he can cite the vanguard "with names and addresses" (as Germain says) is liable to find himself citing the wrong people tomorrow. The confusion between the new worker-vanguard and the official trade-union infrastructure also explains why Comrade Germain does not understand that our concept of this vanguard is an eminently *political* one, and that its political importance at this moment cannot be rated highly enough.

The workers struggles since 1968 have brought this new vanguard to the fore. In these struggles, the vanguard has proven itself as a vanguard by sometimes going far beyond the bounds tolerated by the bureaucracy. This partial, political and, until now, only incompletely worked out break with the bureaucracy in practice has a *central political importance*.

The break is expressed in situations of struggle (mostly on an economic plane) in which different political orientations within this worker-vanguard (e.g., membership in the Social Democratic, centrist, or Communist parties) recede before a consistent defense of class interests and the extension of the struggles that follow from it. The end result of this is *political opposition* to the party and trade-union bureaucracies, even if this vanguard does not yet fully understand it as such. This fact—i.e., that this new worker-vanguard cannot yet be precisely defined politically in this way because it can only draw political conclusions from partial struggles, step by step, and at isolated points in time, and because it cannot formulate its conflict and partial break with the bureaucrats in a clear political way—leads Germain into the error of relegating this whole vanguard to the Stalinists and Social Democrats. Nothing could be more wrong than this. Actual practice has demonstrated that the affiliation of individual members of this vanguard to this or that party is not at all decisive, and is not a barrier. That is, in general, the class-conscious shop steward in plant X who belongs to the SPD does not behave in the same way as his counterpart in plant Y; instead, his conduct is always in keeping with the vanguard in his plant, whose individual members belong sometimes to different political organizations, sometimes to no political organization at all. (In passing it should be mentioned that a new version of entryism, which Comrade Germain predicts for us, is not at all an effective method of "stalking" this new worker-vanguard.) This does not mean an absolute "political vacuum," as Comrade Germain would like to interpret it, rather it is a sign of rifts that are appearing in the control mechanisms maintained by the currents that politically dominate the working class and the trade unions.

This context distinguishes, e.g., the new worker-vanguard from the "organization cadres of the working class," which

are simply defined as those who fill the plant and trade-union structures that always exist in some form or other when there are legal unions.

Let us return to Comrade Germain's exposition. In addition to his sociologically definable worker-vanguard, he keeps a *second*, political vanguard handy: "The concept of a 'political vanguard' can, however, also have a logical, analytical basis. It corresponds exactly to the state of the classes (!)—in which the deep crisis of late capitalism (or imperialism) and the rising line of class struggles objectively (!!) push in the direction of revolutionary program and revolutionary action (!!!)." This is not dogmatic, but rather, if we may say so, it revises several basic Leninist principles by abandoning the mediation of the subjective factor in favor of an "objective push." Compare this with "Building the revolutionary working-class party means fusing the consciousness of the *revolutionary nucleus* with that of the advanced workers" (Mandel, "Lenin und das Problem des proletarischen Klassenbewusstseins," p. 164, emphasis added).

What is Comrade Germain concretely offering us when he says that in considering this "political vanguard" we are really dealing with the "workers who are radicalizing politically and striving for independent class action," i.e., "the politically conscious and radicalizing groups of workers"—or, when it is a concrete question of recruitment—"the individual, politicized, radicalized workers" or "the radical politicized workers who are already anticapitalist," but who do not belong to the "real' worker-vanguard"?

What is behind these formulations when they are applied to the *real* process of the development of consciousness? In our opinion it is an impermissible theorization of phenomena from the 1967-68 wave of radicalization as a result of which young workers were successfully drawn into politicalization processes that had anticapitalist and anti-imperialist content and lay outside the sphere of production. Their radicalization was, therefore, not a product of the class struggle, but rather a more or less pronounced assimilation into the student movement and the left milieu that arose in those years. Of those of them who are still active in the plants (many became apolitical again after the movement slackened off and many left the productive sector through this process of assimilation) some can be counted among the ranks of the new worker-vanguard. Among the latter we find that a large proportion—although the overall number is quite small—are members of revolutionary organizations that exist within this vanguard. Some are also active within the class, but for objective or subjective reasons have not been able to "get a firm footing" in the plants. Others have not been able to find any concrete approach to the class struggle despite five years of increasing workers struggles and are "active somewhere" in a left milieu. As Comrade Germain himself admits, they play only a modest role in current struggles, and to a very marginal extent at that. In our opinion, it is impossible to base a political strategy on them.

But let us return to *his* orientation for our sections: first of all, Germain proposes putting these workers who are radicalizing outside of the sphere of production in a position to become the "actual vanguard" in current strug-

gles by means of "attracting and addressing" these workers—something he considers concrete "rooting in the working class" in the present phase. Since these workers can only be won over through political action in the general sense of the term, we have to prove our "credibility" in this realm in the form of political campaigns (Vietnam, Chile, etc.) and do so under "precisely the same basic conditions for recruiting in the 'nonproletarian' sectors of the mass vanguard at the present time."

This orientation does not lack an inner logic. Since the workers who are already anticapitalist became politicalized in the course of the radicalization around such questions as anti-imperialism, etc., questions that are outside the sphere of production, we only have to show them how we can carry out such actions and campaigns effectively and on a more correct political basis than others.

But right here the logic begins to break down. It assumes that nothing has changed in the intervening period, and thus constructs an orientation on the basis of a situation that is hardly likely to be repeated, since in the meantime workers struggles have taken a powerful upswing and even these radicalized workers are now primarily preoccupied with the problems of the struggles of their class—with the exception of those who have moved off on political tangents. Comrade Germain's example of the thousands of Italian factory workers who took part in the Milan Vietnam demonstration makes this very point: i.e., they participated in part under the banners of their *own* factory committees, etc., which are involved in the class struggle, and in part under the banners of *other organizations*, principally Avanguardia Operaia and Lotta Continua—organizations that won them to their ranks not through anti-imperialist campaigns, but on the plane of the class struggle and their work in the plants.

At this point it is necessary to go into what Comrade Germain formulates as point 1 of his "program";

"1. [We must] carry out a correct intervention in factory and union struggles."

We can already hear the whole IMT breathe a sigh of relief. But we maintain that within the whole context of Germain's theses this sentence can only be understood as some kind of cover (his method in all the recent tendency documents), for it does not flow from his analysis. The sentence is obviously contrived, and in fact interrupts Germain's flow of thoughts. Just read the section leaving this sentence out!

This is in keeping with the general weighting of topics in Germain's document. There is a great deal said about political campaigns, little about "intervention in factory and union struggles," a formulation which, however, is always adorned with the adjective "correct." Perhaps that is because it is so propagandistic that one could hardly make a mistake as long as he was acquainted with our basic position.

Above all what Germain fails to see, and cannot see through his "NMV-glasses," is the fact that these politicalized worker elements too can only be won to our organization through the extension of current workers struggles by providing concrete answers to concrete problems with elements of the Transitional Program. Above all, however, this means coming to grips with the very problems the new worker-vanguard sees itself confronted with, and these are the problems of the current class-struggle situation as a whole. We have to develop these struggles in a direc-

tion that implies the inherent possibility of a *political break* of the worker-vanguard with the political currents that dominate the trade unions—indeed, a direction that makes such a break unavoidable. For us, there cannot and should not be a Chinese wall between the current level of struggle on the economic plane and that on the political plane. We must develop the political struggle out of the economic struggle by promoting qualitative demands that are in keeping with the transitional strategy, a strategy that is acquiring a new and comprehensive relevance. Of course, in the framework of this concept, political campaigns make a great deal of sense, and indeed it is only in this manner that their content can really be communicated.

In this context, it is only of marginal interest to speculate on and develop prescriptions as to how the politicalized workers might become the actual vanguard. A much more important question is how the vanguard that proves itself in struggle can be politicalized. And the former question merges with the answer to this latter question: only by providing rigorous political answers for the entire class and by making a practical contribution toward the further development of these struggles.

Comrade Germain raises the charge that "the comrades of the Compass Tendency suddenly introduce a distinction between this 'next step' (i.e., the central organizational task), and the 'central political task.'" We plead not guilty. We believe we have demonstrated that the "step that leads from the essentially propagandistic group to the revolutionary party . . . [that] begins to sink roots in the working class" requires an orientation toward the worker-vanguard and influencing this vanguard through our revolutionary strategy—a strategy whose central axis is the Transitional Program.

We have to turn things around and accuse Comrade Germain himself of making this "astonishing" distinction. First:

We must see "intervention in the real ongoing class struggle as the *principal task* of the organization," and we must "carry out such an intervention in practice with a line that proves itself superior (i.e., correct and effective) to that of other left organizations. . ." (emphasis added).

And then:

"the decisive *next step forward*: winning *individual* radicalized workers to our whole program" "[under] precisely the same basic conditions for recruiting in the 'nonproletarian' sectors of the mass vanguard at the present time."

Let's examine Germain's last statement. It is interesting to read that "our method is that of grasping the *political* requirements of a radicalization of high school and university students brought about by the general social crisis of late capitalism, i.e., it is the *same method* [emphasis added] with which we approach the problems of the politicizing proletarian vanguard."

Is this supposed to mean that the method of the Transitional Program can be applied to high school and university students too? If that were the case, then the IMT would be sure of receiving the unanimous approval of the LTF. Or is this supposed to mean that the method of the Transitional Program is not applicable for winning the proletarian vanguard either? In the light of what was previously said, we are forced to conclude the latter.

An indication of what direction Germain's methodological alternative might point to is given in a document which can be counted among the predecessors of the European Perspectives Document. We assume that Germain was the author of this earlier document. We quote:

"It is still necessary today to point out to an already broad vanguard as well as to the broadest masses what a socialist Europe would be like. Under conditions of profound social unrest and an overall social crisis, the 'maximum' program acquires an agitational value such as it never had in the past" ("The Crisis of Capitalism in Europe," *Intercontinental Press*, April 7, 1969, p. 349, emphasis added).

We can view Germain's method of using objectivism in dealing with the class political process and maximalist propaganda in dealing with the building of the organization in the context of a period in which the Trotskyist world movement could only demonstrate the correctness of its program through objective developments on the one hand and propaganda on the other. But methodological errors that can be explained as results of the previous period, which was so unfavorable for us, must be overcome in the present stage. Four years from now, we do not wish to be conducting long-winded debates about whether the Tenth World Congress European document included "vague, elliptical, and one-sided formulations."

4. The Problem of the Social Democracy

Comrade Germain notes that our estimation of SPD is raised in opposition to a new version of entryism, which he predicts for the Compass Tendency. From this he draws the conclusion that "a revision of the definition of the SPD as a bourgeois workers' party is nothing but a conscious or unconscious effort to erect the necessary barriers even now so that in the future a somewhat more durable and effective resistance can be put up against this unavoidable (!) pressure [to enter the SPD again]." We don't know whether Germain is a good psychologist, but this is a remarkable form of argumentation for a political discussion. Perhaps Germain is carrying over the concept of "psychological-propaganda victories" to the internal discussion in the International. Some caution is called for here. The bad reputation entryism has among our membership, for which there are good reasons, combined with Comrade Germain's authority as a leader of the International, could produce rather serious mixed emotions. This is a questionable weapon in tendency struggles.

Is there a danger that has to be warned against anywhere in Europe of an entryist tendency in the Fourth International? That is not our impression; all indications are to the contrary. But if such a tendency did exist, Comrade Germain, who was the most widely known apologist for entryism to the bitter end, would share a certain amount of the responsibility for it. Why has the leadership that directed this course in Europe given us no real analysis and balance sheet on entryism? Why were they satisfied with a few forced sentences about how entryism was in general correct but a number of factors were underestimated, etc., and how a completely different situation prevails now, and such considerations are passé, etc.? This sort of treatment of the entryism problem is extended

to the European document in the perilous section 11 on "Three Tactics" (!), a section that we proposed to delete.

We have already demonstrated in the previous section that the "entryism prognosis" in relation to our orientation is without foundation. We have demonstrated that the new worker-vanguard is not identical to the ossified Social Democratic factory councils, that the new worker-vanguard is not forming *within* the SPD, but *in opposition* to Social Democratic politics and Social Democratic control over the trade unions, and with increasing differentiation from the Social Democracy. But even if we were moving in the direction of an "orientation toward the SPD" (which, we repeat, is not the case) this would not automatically imply a new version of entryism. Germain's formulation is all too clear in this respect: this orientation of the Compass comrades "will come under increasing pressure . . . to turn into an orientation toward the SPD (*i.e.*, into a new version of entryism)" (emphasis added). That's how obvious it seems to Germain that the two are identical. It corresponds to the conclusions he drew from all the analyses he made during the fifties and sixties—shrewd analyses of changes taking place in the Social Democracy and the class-struggle situation that always ended with the sentence, that as long as the SPD maintained its influence over the working class, entryism was correct and in fact would remain correct "as long as no revolutionary working-class party recognized by the masses exists." (*Die Internationale*, March-April 1963, p. 109. Emphasis in original.) And since this party still does not exist, the author still senses entryist dangers (for other people, of course).

In contrast, we maintain that even if the prognoses on the postwar period made by the leadership of that time—Comrades Pablo, Frank, and Germain—had been completely correct (they were not correct on all points) the correctness of entryism would not follow *automatically*. The tactic to be adopted is dependent on a whole number of other factors, not *just* on the prognosis.

In order to be able to really polemicize against the Compass Tendency, Germain, be it by accident or by design, goes slightly astray in formulating our initial position. He writes: "The comrades of the Compass Tendency deny this with respect to the SPD (otherwise their rejection of the characterization of the SPD as a bourgeois workers' party would be meaningless)." A political discussion like the present one requires particular preciseness in formulation. *The term "bourgeois workers' party" does not appear either in the European document or in our draft for revision of the EPD or in the introduction to our draft.*

Let us cite the verbatim text of each document:

"Still, the conclusion to be drawn from these two phenomena is not that the Social-Democratic parties have become bourgeois parties. . . . The Social Democracy remains dependent—in certain countries like West Germany and Belgium, more than ever dependent—upon its working-class electoral base. This is an electoral base that, unlike that of the Democratic Party in the United States, expresses an elementary class reflex through its vote, that is, the determination to vote for a working-class party instead of voting for a bourgeois party. The class nature of these parties is also reflected in their links with the trade-union movement. The counterrevolutionary and procapitalist nature of the policy of the leaders of these

countries (a policy that dates from neither today nor yesterday, but that has been a constant phenomenon for almost sixty years) changes nothing in this objective fact. . . ." (European Document, p. 12.)

"We do not agree with the "generally recognized view" of the social-democratic parties as workers parties on the slim basis that they remain dependent on their worker voting base and have an influence on the trade-union bureaucracy. Both of these criteria are surely met by the Peronists in Argentina. On the contrary we hold that 1) the class character of a party can change and is not strictly determined by its origin and traditions, 2) social-democratic parties in different countries, under different conditions can have different characters despite the similarity of their names, 3) the minimal definition for a "workers party" is that it works in the working class and orients toward the working class. This no longer holds for all the social-democratic parties." ("Compass Draft for Revision of the EPD," p. 4.)

In section 4 of our draft we attempt to sketch these differences that exist among the European Social Democrats, perhaps inadequately. The EPD and Comrade Germain do not do this; instead they defend a general characterization common to the Social Democrats as a whole. We do not think that our attempt lies outside the tradition of our movement. Let us read what the Eighth World Congress resolution, "The Development of West European Capitalism and the Tasks of Revolutionary Marxists," has to say about this:

"(13) During recent years, the evolution of the Social Democracy toward the right has proceeded at an accelerated pace in almost all the countries of Western Europe. *Two motor forces that must be carefully distinguished* are at the bottom of this evolution:

"(a) In some cases the classical arguments and motives of reformism in a boom period are at work, without this *necessarily* implying a decline or modification of the traditional working-class base of these parties. This is particularly true of the Austrian Socialist Party and the British Labour Party to a certain degree indicated below.

"(b) In other cases what is involved is the expression of a profound modification in the social composition of these parties. The administrative bureaucracy of the state and municipalities, the new middle classes, even small and middle capitalist businessmen, *have displaced the workers as active members of these parties*. The process of degeneration, which has gone farthest in *West Germany* and the Netherlands, is marked by a *complete break* with the ideology of the past, the official renunciation of Marxism *and the class struggle*, a refusal even to speak of any kind of socialization of the means of production or the extension of workers rights in the plants as aims of socialist politics, and even official promulgation of reactionary concepts like the 'inclusion of workers among stockholders' and 'deproletarianization through the transformation of the workers into individual owners.'

"Even in the case of the Dutch and German parties, the *electoral base* remains working class, and the phenomenon of an electoral polarization around these parties can continue to occur when, *in the absence of worthwhile alternatives*, the proletariat is compelled to consider a party like the German Socialist Party as the only possible alternative to the bourgeois parties. But in such cases the votes won by these parties are gained literally *despite*

their program, their leaders and their orientation, and not because of them.

"The *Labour Party* represents a special case. Like the Austrian Socialist Party, it represents the *only* Social Democratic party that continues to be followed, due to historical reasons and the structure of the workers' movement, *by virtually the entire politically conscious working class* of the country. The death of Gaitskell and his replacement by Wilson, plus the strengthening of the left wing in the trade unions and the bankruptcy of the rightist policy in the 1959 elections, led to a small shift to the left in this party during 1963-64 in contrast to all the other Social Democratic parties in Western Europe." (*ISR*, Spring 1966, pp. 72-73; emphasis added.)

In this document we find neither the term "bourgeois workers' party" nor a defense of any sort of generalized characterization of these parties as workers' parties in the traditional sense. Instead we find concrete characterizations of actual parties.

When Germain writes in his latest contribution: "*Of course, sociologically speaking the SPD is no longer a workers' party (even in the reformist sense of the term)* [emphasis added]; but this is nothing new, it has been true for over half a century," we are confronted with a rather far-reaching revision of history. Up till now, we have indeed classified the SPD of 1923 as a reformist workers' party in the classical sense. So when Germain says that the character of the SPD has not changed in fifty years, the LTT will agree with him. To be sure, the LTT equates reformist and bourgeois workers' parties to a great degree, regarding the latter as a political-programmatic definition of the former. Germain, on the other hand, sees "bourgeois workers' parties" as a special formation, one that replaced the reformist-workers-party character of the SPD "more than fifty years ago."

But we have to put this revision of history into a more modern context. Every author in *Die Internationale*, the official organ of the German section, in every article since 1967 that dealt with the SPD, whether in a broad or narrow perspective, *insists* that the SPD is changing its character, and this is analyzed step by step. In these articles the "transformation of the SPD from a reformist workers' party into a liberal-social party" is discussed. Referring to its "development into a people's party," it is commented that the SPD "is no longer even a social-reformist workers' party," and "it is not even a militant-reformist workers' party, but on the other hand it is a textbook example of where the workers' party road can lead to," etc., etc.

And a particularly clear example: "This is the road of the SPD from a 'workers' party' or party of the workers to a *people's party*" ("The Stuttgart Convention of the SPD," *Die Internationale*, March 1958, p. 34; quotation marks and italics in the original).

Although the author of this article and most of the others we have cited was then the secretary of the German section, Comrade Germain, himself a frequent contributor to the journal, never polemicized against these views or these definitions. And it is our opinion that there would have been no reason to do so. At that time the German section carefully analyzed the SPD and its evolution, even though the results of their analysis spoke more against entryism than for it. In this analysis we think we uphold the tradition of the German section, although we no longer

support the conclusion—that entryism was still a valid tactic—as much as we used to.

We would like to call Comrade Germain's attention to two problems raised by his line of argumentation:

1. He writes that if we do not regard the SPD as a workers' party, that can only mean that the workers feel themselves to be "bourgeois" or else are completely indifferent politically.

This summary logic raises counterquestions: Did the Bolivian workers feel themselves to be bourgeois as long as they supported the MNR? Did Lechin regard himself as a bourgeois politician up to the point when he split from the MNR with the PRIN? Or was the MNR a workers' party at that time, changing its character only later? Do the Peronist workers regard themselves as bourgeois because in overwhelming numbers they support Peronism and elected it to office? Are the Peronist trade-union leaders not a part of the workers movement, and did the election of Campora and Perón reflect no kind of class instinct? Or is the alternative true—that the Peronist party is a "workers party" as is the SPD according to Germain's criteria?

2. And this leads directly to a second problem. Since Germain can find no other support for his thesis, he finally reduces the characterization of the SPD as a "workers' party" to a single criterion—that the workers *as workers* regard the SPD as *their* party and thus as a *workers' party*. As indicated above, this can force Comrade Germain against his will to recognize as workers' parties a whole number of other parties that he does not characterize as such. Most importantly, however, with this criterion Germain makes his definition dependent on a poll of the West German workers. If he took such a poll he would make the startling discovery that from the ranks in the plants through the worker-vanguard on up to the "organizational cadres of the class" and the trade-union bureaucracy, the prevailing view is that the SPD is no longer a workers' party; that at this time there is no workers' party (the German CP is not seen as a serious alternative for other reasons); and that as a result the trade unions have to assume certain political tasks that really should be the concern of a workers' party. Germain's counterexample, the discussion on the formation of an "employees' wing" in the SPD, proves just the opposite of what it is supposed to: who would propose forming a workers' wing in a workers' party? In the course of this discussion an understanding of the evolution of the SPD is expressed, it's true, even if in a thoroughly distorted and hazy fashion. We do not share the view that a party can be characterized by the sole criterion of what its adherents and voters think of it. But Comrade Germain's line of argument can put him in a peculiar position: after determining that the SPD is a workers' party because he believes that the workers think it is, he must then contradict the workers, who are of another opinion, and explain to them that they don't understand

the character of the SPD.

In addition (and we do not blame him for this since this is not his field of practical work), Comrade Germain fails to understand a whole number of concrete details having to do with the SPD.

Thus, for example, it is *wrong* to maintain that the worker-vanguard regards the SPD as a party that "opposes the representatives of the employers' interests on immediate questions." Even the broad rank and file in the plants no longer considers this to be true, and why should they?

It is wrong to maintain that class struggles broke out so soon after the 1972 federal elections *because* the SPD won and this stimulated class activity. Rather a CDU victory would *really* have led to a militant reaction in the round of wage negotiations following the elections. However, *despite* the sharp polarization in the federal elections, important sections of the class did not grant the victor Brandt the desired "grace period." Finally, it is wrong to maintain that the present-day role of the SPD as governing party, as a co-equal bourgeois alternative regime, is the same as its role as an alternative regime, as a reformist stopgap for the bourgeoisie "since 1918."

Once again on the "bourgeois workers' party"

We do not share the opinion of the LTT that this is the political formulation to describe the Social Democracy given the (petty) bourgeois political character of reformism. And thus we don't think that nothing about the character of the SPD as a politically bourgeois reformist workers' party has changed since classical times. We believe that Lenin had in mind a specific characterization going beyond this when he used the term "bourgeois workers' party." Germain gives an indication of this with the example of New Zealand. We contended, to be sure, that this is a tendency whose outlines were first appearing during Lenin's lifetime, and indeed did not fully develop till after World War II.

Therefore we would say: first of all, the concept "workers' party" without further specification is only marginally useful. Second, we would say: Lenin's formula "bourgeois workers' party" is an algebraic term analogous to his formulation on "the democratic dictatorship of the workers' and peasants" (Germain would say that Lenin would have signed this statement). It is an algebraic formula composed of ". . . workers' party" and "bourgeois . . . party," a formula whose content must be concretely determined in each particular instance.

And the conclusion we have drawn about the definition of the *present-day* SPD is:

The SPD is a bourgeois party that is based on the working class and is supported by it.

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