

(C O P Y)

PRELIMINARY STATEMENT OF THE MILWAUKEE SUPPORTERS
OF THE CHINESE REVOLUTION AND THE PROLETARIAN ORIENTATION

ON THE CONTINUING CRISIS WITHIN THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY

In the history of revolutionary parties, unprincipled leadership formations have invariably tried to conceal their opportunist politics and fear of debate over fundamental problems of development, for Marxists, by resort to administrative priorities, formal argument, and organizational demagoguery.

The Institutional Majority in the S.W.P. invested its political bankruptcy in a Bolshevik Rule Book, entitled "Organizational Character of the SWP", at the 1965 Convention. And this Caricature of Bolshevism would lead logically to the inseparability of the Political Committee and the Control Commission. They are indeed one body, whose police powers are designed to protect their abandonment of Marxist method and Trotskyist heritage on the touchstone questions of our epoch: on the counter-revolutionary role of the Soviet regime; on the role of the Marxist party in modern socialist revolutions; on the proletarian party and class-orientation; on the proletarian Marxist character of the Chinese leadership and regime; on the internationalist content of the Chinese Communist struggle against the Soviet bureaucracy; and on the profound socialist cultural revolution in China.

The Institutional Majority in the SWP has renewed its administrative attack upon the Chinese Marxist minority in the SWP, has subordinated the function of serious political debate to the calendar on the wall, and has ordered the Milwaukee Trotskyists to halt all efforts at presenting their views to the Socialist Youth.

Meanwhile the social conquests and political progress of the Maoist forces in China frighten the imperialist chiefs and Kremlin restorationist renegades alike. Before the dramatic revolutionary democracy -- featured in demonstrations, big-character posters, and debate by inspired millions of Red Guard youths in Maoist China -- entire states and political formations tremble -- because the world revolution is on the march.

Why then does the handful of persons in the SWP, who are in authority and are taking the capitalist road, tremble? Because they have lived for 17 years in progressive retreat from Marxist method on the dynamics of world revolution in Asia. They have chosen to call a great socialist revolution in China a sub-standard counter-revolution with a built-in revolutionary role. Verily -- a "happening." They have lost their senses completely on the proletarian cultural revolution in China, while the force of this struggle undermines the corrupt parties of international stalinism and chauvinist social-democracy. These events now shape all further development of the international working-class struggle.

On March 16th, the Institutional Majority in the SWP elected to hide its ideological bankruptcy in directing the mobilization of its Control Commission against the Milwaukee comrades. More, it is clear that Warde, Hansen, and Dobbs have elected to debate with themselves, within the security of a calendar-conscious and sterilized petty-bourgeois majority. Once again the mounting pressures of imperialism take as their instrument a new layer of middle-class intellectuals and academicians saddled upon the parties of the working-class.

On customary duty, appropriate at bedtime, the Kerry detail went to the closet, there to exhibit its contempt for the proletarian minority, for the dramatic advance of the cultural revolution in China -- and for poetry in general. And by that disdain alone, Mao and 750 million Chinese would never be heard on the platform of the SWP.

Edward Shaw, saturated from an after-dinner engagement and speech on "How Model Revolutions are Made and Approved," directed the Control Commission to make another tour of duty on the Milwaukee front, and to investigate Marxist political education of the youth. This Commission would be a disgrace if it were not the Political Committee, which is the disgraced. On its last Milwaukee swing in 1963, the Commission awarded epaulets to thieves who had filched the treasury of a "Committee to Aid the Monroe Defendants," victims of bourgeois racial justice in Monroe, N.C. Organizational thongs were strapped on the Milwaukee Party workers to guarantee the Majority's guardianship of the youth.

The perversity of the Commission's act is more startling in the daylight of Dobbs' master-rule: "Put your money where your mouth is." Still, paeons of praise for the proletarian base would be sung on collection day wherever the worker-peons could be rallied to pae-on -- just to bring the SWP's proletarian orientation up to date.

Therewith the Milwaukee comrades can describe no useful purpose in a second bout with the united PCCC, other than to squander the funds of devoted party members on the administrative fantasies of abandoned men, frightened at the prospect of a political debate with the Chinese Minority workers armed with the dialectics of a great revolution, and a 3 in 1 combination.

The Milwaukee Trotskyists, disdainful in an Institutional Majority's obsession with a calendar approach to Marxist tasks, proposed in a letter for March 6th that the Party engage an Active Workers' Conference (or Expanded Plenum) to face the questions posed by the Cultural Revolution in China and the New Course of the Bukharinist regime in Russia.

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On March 9th, Edward Shaw replied for the PCCC: calendar-wise the proposal would be "wholly impractical." But, in fact, the decision had been reached to saddle the Majority's finest, Tom Kerry, for police duty in Milwaukee.

Let the SWP June Plenum comfort itself with Joe Hansen's "International Round-up and Commentary" on the promise that travel and horsemanship are broadening; with a new round of expulsions, on the guarantee that security and sectarian fellowship are narrowing. Sic transit gloria mundi!

Preliminary Statement
James E. Boulton
Chinese Minority
March 22, 1967

(C O P Y)

For the information of American Socialists and Workers:

Motion of the Milwaukee SWP Executive Committee, for Mar. 26, 1967
ON DISAFFILIATION FROM THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY
Motion carried (19 for, 0 against)

"The Milwaukee Branch of the SWP severs its affiliation with the SWP of America, to direct its energies to uniting all genuine internationalists and revolutionary socialists who support a consistent Marxist position of solidarity behind the revolutionary conquests of the Maoist regime in China, the great proletarian cultural revolution, and the Maoist struggle against capitalist restoration in the USSR.

The Milwaukee members attribute the continuing organizational crisis in the SWP -- its membership decline, endless splits and expulsions, deepening conservatism and administrative abuse -- to the fundamentally incorrect position taken in 1950 by the Institutional Majority (and its co-thinkers in the Fourth International) on the Chinese Revolution and its leadership party; and to the progressive abandonment of the working-class character and orientation of the SWP.

The decision of the Milwaukee Marxists, to sever the ties which bind them to a moribund clique of "trotskyist" trustees in the SWP administration, was not taken casually, but deliberately, after a decade of disciplined and frustrating effort to correct the programmatic errors of the SWP Institutional Majority on the Chinese question, to halt its steady adaptation to petty-bourgeois moods and futile political adventures.

In the face of administrative fraud we have concluded that the handful of persons in the Party, who are in authority and are taking the capitalist road, has abandoned the principled method and contributions of Trotskyism to the struggle of the working-class, not only in name, but in theory and practice. The whole dismal future of the SWP is summed up in The Militant for January 23, 1967, in a dangerously false positional document, entitled "The Upheaval in China -- An Analysis."

The Kruschov revisionists and their liberal allies in the camp of imperialism also know that the broad revolutionary front of Maoism in China has undertaken essentially Trotskyist tasks in extending the socialist revolution into the stage of workers' democracy and cultural re-construction. It is entirely true that the Chinese Marxists carry out these tasks in their own way, in accordance with their own deep understanding of Chinese realities, and as the genuine organizers of the proletarian dictatorship in China. Lenin once said: "Theory is grey -- but the tree of life is ever green."

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The former members of the Milwaukee SWP have agreed to respect all financial obligations incurred to the SWP through March 1, 1967."

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Motion: that the former members of the Milwaukee SWP shall adopt as a provisional organizational designation -- "Progressive Workers of America" ... carried.

(C O P Y)

Detroit, Michigan
March 26, 1967

To the Political Committee

Dear Comrades:

I think that one of the things the convention this year should do is act on a resolution, tentatively entitled "For Independent Black Political Action," and that if possible the June plenum should discuss such a resolution and even adopt a draft, if time allows.

This proposal does not exclude another resolution on the black freedom struggle and movement, if other comrades have such a resolution in mind (a conjunctural assessment, as in 1965; or any other type). I have no opinions on that, and I am not opposed to action on other resolutions at the convention and/or plenum. All I am saying is that if there are other resolutions on the general subject, I think they should be in addition to the one proposed above. (As I wrote Comrade Shaw some time ago, I withdrew my proposal for a Negro transitional program for this convention because I did not think it could be prepared adequately this year.)

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The resolution I propose is very timely, in my opinion: it deals with the central questions facing the movement at this stage in its development, and for the next couple of years probably. It should also be relatively easy for us to prepare such a resolution, because it does not, or need not, confront us with any new theoretical problems. That is, we worked out our attitude and approach to this question in 1963. All we have to do now is bring it up to date, and expand it. If anyone objects to it on this ground ("there's nothing new to this"), I can only reply that this is true about our members, or I hope it is true, but it is new to many thousands of the best black militants we want to reach.

One of the aspects of the present situation is the unevenness of development of the various sectors. Most of the present partisans of black power today were either too young to know what was going on in 1963-4 or were then under the King-Rustin influence and hostile to what was called black nationalism. This refers not only to activists in SNCC, CORE and other groups, but unaffiliated intellectuals. It is as though they were born very recently; and things that we discussed in 1963-64, and are taken as commonplace by us, are new to them. The present audience for these ideas is larger than it was three-four years ago; and it may turn out that they will now or soon receive their first sound testing. In part this will depend on our ability to understand their timeliness and to present them effectively.

Following are some rough ideas for a resolution, or for a report on the question at the June plenum.

The central question facing Afro-Americans (and not only because 1968 is an election year) is political. All the problems -- economic, social, etc. -- are related to politics. It is futile to talk about black control of the black community unless you begin with politics; it is futile to talk about black unity, however you define that, unless it is placed in a political context. But the old kind of politics, however it is dressed up, will not do in mobilizing the masses in the ghetto. The old political structures cannot be the instruments of black liberation. A new one is needed, that will be independent of and fighting against the parties that have historically served and still serve the function of oppressing black people.

Can such a party be formed? Can it accomplish much if it is formed? The experience of the FNP in 1964, and the lessons. The experience of the MFD, and the lessons. The Lowndes County experience, and prospects. The Powell case, and the different conclusions that are being drawn from it. The arguments of the CP, SP and others against an independent party, and what's wrong with them.

As concretely as possible (while making clear that all such decisions will be made by its members) we have to show that such a party is feasible as well as necessary; what its nature will be; how it will function and what it will try to do; what obstacles it will face; the necessity for a long-range as well as a short-range perspective.

Will it be an electoral party? Yes, but not only an electoral organization. Will it be a mass party? It will try to become one, but that can't be achieved by declaration overnight, only through struggle and organization. Should it be "declared" into existence, as the FNP was, or set as a goal, and worked toward with persistence and propaganda and education, as the Lowndes County party was? Will it be an explicitly and avowedly radical or revolutionary party? That will depend on its membership, and the degree to which radicals and revolutionaries are able to influence its ideology and program.

What will its program be? That too will depend on what its membership and leadership decide. Radicals and revolutionaries will have their ideas to offer. In this context we can discuss what we think its program should be -- as much or as little, as specifically or as generally, as we think advisable. Here we can perhaps introduce certain transitional program conceptions; why a black party aiming to be a mass party has to have a position on such questions as 30 for 40 as well as immediately "radical" questions.

The question of alliances and allies of black people and their party. Internationalism and the joint struggle against imperialism; the struggle against the war in Vietnam. A perspective of white allies in the U.S., immediately and in the long run. Attitude to the unions. Attitude to a labor party. United fronts, among blacks and between blacks and whites.

Some of the above questions can be omitted; others can be added as we think of them. What should emerge is a statement of why we think an independent black party is the next step in the struggle, of what we think such a party should try to do, of what we think the repercussions of such a party will be, and of what we think are the best arguments against the opponents of such a party. Black militants looking for the next step will welcome such an exposition, and if we are correct in thinking it is the next step will be influenced by it. The final resolution could be widely sold in the ghetto. Preparation of the resolution would promote the education of our own membership; even though it would not cover all questions, the discussion of the resolution would probably lead to the raising of other questions that would have educational benefits for our members, new and old.

Adoption of this resolution will not solve all of our problems. It will not, for example, allay suspicions that the SWP wants to exploit black people. I do not know anything at this time that can prevent such charges. What we can and should do in this resolution is to present, openly and honestly, our reasons for supporting an independent black party, both short- and long-range. This will not prevent misunderstandings or even slanders, but it will get through to some at the beginning, and to more later. Patience and honesty are our only safeguards, limited though the results will be at first.

This will require our setting down (briefly, briefly) our perspectives for the American revolution and the place of the black people and black workers in it. Perhaps there are some differences among us on this (nuances mainly, I think) but if we keep our eye on the main objective on this particular resolution I don't think it will present any real problems.

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I suggest that the PC hold a meeting to discuss this proposal, and, if it is approved in the main, that it take steps without delay to implement it. At the very least, there should be a point for it on the plenum agenda, with a report on it and discussion. A copy of this letter, the minutes of your discussion, and any other written material could be submitted before the plenum to the NC members so that they could be prepared to discuss it at the plenum. If more than that could be done before the plenum, that is, if a first draft of the resolution could

be ready by then, all the better. But if that proves impossible, a report and plenum discussion could prepare the way for a draft soon after the plenum, getting to the branches early in the summer. I will cooperate in every way I can in helping to prepare the report and/or first draft.

Comradely,

S/ George Breitman