

S P A R T A C I S T

INTERNAL

PRE-CONFERENCE DISCUSSION BULLETIN

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James ROBERTSON
New-YORK -N.Y.
ETATS-UNIS

Dear comrade,

You will find enclosed the translation of an internal document written to answer some current "arguments" from the O.C.I. and the I.C.

It may at the same time be useful to you for the history of the differences in the French Trotskyist movement.

Communist greetings

/s/ Denise

for
U.C.I.
Voix - Ouvriere

June 7th 1966

INTERNAL DOCUMENT

(This text can be shown to members of the O.C.I. and related organizations--
Revoltes--CLER--I.O.--)

TO ANSWER SOME LIES

The comrades will be able to find in Healy's letter to members of the Spartacist group, which we are publishing, several examples characteristic of a method which consists of using lies or slanted reporting instead of political arguments.

As far as we are concerned, Healy says in substance that we placed the Conference under the obligation of recognizing that the IVth International was dead, and that if they did not, we would leave. He states that we were asked to stay to defend our position, which is surely a very original interpretation of the expression "get out!" addressed to us by Banda.

Healy qualifies the Japanese Communist Revolutionary League (J.C.R.L.) as a state capitalist group. As it is evident according to the texts of the discussion between the I.C. and the representative of the J.C.R.L., that group considers not only the U.S.S.R. but even China and the Eastern European countries as degenerated workers' states. Even if the J.C.R.L. considered China and the Eastern European countries as we do--that is, as bourgeois States--that would still not make them supporters of "state capitalist" theories.

This is not even the case, however, and Healy knows perfectly well. But it is undoubtedly easier to explain a negative vote in a letter in this way, than to report accurately the opinions of a speaker who does not share yours.

Healy also tries to discredit the Spartacist delegation by speaking in insinuating terms of the relationships within this delegation. This is insulting, and, judging from everything we've heard, absolutely false. This discredits no one but Healy.

Healy says further that Robertson laughed in the face of the Greek delegate, which is also absolutely false. Neither Robertson, nor anybody else had the heart to laugh before the saddening spectacle offered by the I.C. Conference that evening.

We have numerous political criticisms to make of the Spartacist group, but the methods which consist of introducing lies or insults into a discussion are one of the most frightening marks of the penetration and influence of Stalinist morality carried by the organizations of the IVth International. Most lamentable of all is that if these methods are based on a social fact in the case of Stalinism, transposed into the IVth International they are based on nothing except incapacity.

Another example is the manner in which the O.C.I. (IVth International) discusses the origin of our organization. They stated, on several occasions and in various ways, that we have never belonged to the IVth International. Formally, this is true! But then, formally, the same is true for them, too.

They say, depending on whom they are speaking to, one of the following:

--that our organization did not participate in the Founding Conference of 1938 of the IVth International--or better yet it refused to participate--

--that if the militants who are at the origin of our organization did belong to the P.O.I., French Section of the IVth International, they were part of a tendency within the P.O.I. opposed to this participation.

It is clear that this argumentation was worked out by a professional historian.

Assuming that these statements were true, what would they contribute to the discussion of the political problem we raise? Namely we raise the problem of why the organizations of the IVth International in France, from 1939 on, represented a corrupt petty-bourgeois environment in which it was impossible to train or educate bolshevik militants, an impossibility only sadly illustrated by their nationalist attitude in 1940-41.

But let us look at the facts.

Our organization was not at the Conference of 1938

Obviously, since the first political act of our organization dates only from November 1940, and its origin cannot be validly placed further back.

And if their reasoning were valid we could say just as rightly that neither the O.C.I., nor Informations Ouvrieres, participated in the Founding Conference and that they never belonged to the IV International. It's silly, of course, but these comrades seem to be content with such arguments.

At the time the comrades who are at the origin of our organization were militants of the P.O.I. The P.O.I. was the official section in France of the IVth International and our comrades were thus "juridically" members of the IVth International.

Lambert cannot say as much. He, himself, belonged to the P.C.I., which did not join the IVth International. We confess that we knew nothing of this aspect of Lambert's life, which we never believed to have any political importance whatever. We learned it in London from Lambert in person. If they attribute any significance to that, let them tell us what conclusions they draw.

Let us add that Lambert thus joined the IVth International "administratively" only in 1944 (by the fusion with the P.O.I.) just as Healy belonged to a group, the Workers' International League (W.I.L.), which joined the IVth International during the same period. All this is "administratively" speaking of course, for, in 1944 this IVth International was politically no longer the IVth International.

Our comrades left the P.O.I. in October 1939.

So much for the juridical aspect of the matter.

Let us look at the political aspect

No doubt this is the one which interests the militants of the O.C.I. least of all, but it is up to us to teach them to be interested in it.

September 1939: the Communist Party and all related organizations are outlawed by the decree of Daladier of September 26th 1939. Numerous Trotskyist militants are arrested. Disorganization and demoralization reign among people ill-prepared to pass into clandestine activity.

Let us compare what our comrades wrote during the period that followed with the writings of those who are now said to represent the "continuity" with the IVth International created by Trotsky with the Transitional Programme.

Our comrades:

--January 1940: the bulletin "L'Ouvrier" (The Worker), of which only one copy of No.2 remains, entitled "Organe Marxiste-Leniniste" (Marxist-Leninist Organ). This bulletin quotes the Transitional Programme, associates itself with it, ends with "long live the IVth International," and defends political positions which can be compared with the publications of the professors who have squandered Trotsky's heritage.

--November 1940: the pamphlet "The struggle against the second imperialist world war" which speaks in the name of the IVth International, and which bears on the cover "collection IVeme Internationale" (Fourth International Series).

--June 1941: the leaflet "Long live the Red Army", in the name of the IVth International.

--June 12th, 1942: the leaflet "Collection IVeme Internationale" (IVth International Series).

--July 12th 1942: idem

--Beginning on October 15th, 1942 "La Lutte de Classes" (Class Struggle) of which the first two issues bear "'Organe Communiste' (IVeme Internationale)" (Communist Organ - IVth International); then, beginning with No.3, November 7, 1942 through No.36, September 19, 1944 "'Organe du Groupe Communiste' (IVeme Internationale)" (Organ of the Communist Group - IVth International). Then it became "'Organe de l'Union Communiste' (IVeme Internationale)" (Organ of the Communist League - IVth International) until the polemics opened by the P.C.I. on "administrative" grounds led us to drop the "IVth International"; such a continuity is well safeguarded!

Of course we must concern ourselves with the content of these texts. For that, our comrades should read or re-read them.

The "continuers" who didn't want to continue.

What were the people who were "continuing" the IVth International--although they did not say so then--doing at this time? The "historians" of the O.C.I. would do well to tell us.

When the continuers reappear, it's to write:

"Joint action with the bourgeoisie"

..."In these conditions joint action with the bourgeoisie is meaningful only to the extent --a) that it is really directed against the dominant German imperialism. --b) that it gives rise to a true movement of the masses for their demands. That is, joint action is meaningful only to the extent that it is carried out within the framework of the historical interests of the proletariat by the mobilization of the masses for the proletarian program...; ...(...)..."

"--b) The French bourgeoisie has rushed into a blind alley! To save itself from revolution, it threw itself into Hitler's arms. To save itself from this hold, it has only to throw itself into the arms of the Revolution. We are not saying that it will do so cheerfully; nor that the faction of the bourgeoisie capable of playing this game is the most important: the majority of the bourgeoisie secretly awaits its salvation from England, a large minority awaits it from Hitler. It is to the French faction of the bourgeoisie that we hold our

"hand..."...(...)..."

"...However our politics in this domain should be above all directed toward the faction of the bourgeoisie which wants to be French before all else; which feels that it can expect the salvation of France only from the popular masses; which is capable of giving rise to a petty-bourgeois nationalist movement, capable of playing the card of the Revolution (from the right or from the left or eventually from both the right and the left)"

"Slogans for the national struggle"

"--a) How to find slogans"

"...(...)...we should be the defenders of the riches which generations of peasants and workers of France have accumulated. We should also be the defenders of the artistic and scientific treasures of France, the defenders of the magnificent contribution of French writers and scholars to the intellectual patrimony of humanity, the defenders of the great socialist and revolutionary tradition of France"...(...)..."

"Down with the pillage of French riches" -- "The wheat which the peasants of France have grown, the milk of the cows which they have raised, the machines without which our workers would be without work and without bread; the laboratory equipment built by the genius of our scholars, all these French riches, should stay in France".

(Bulletin of the Committee for the IVth International)

- our emphasis - No2 September 20, 1940 -

But this is not written in the name of the IVth International. They go back from their previous positions. For them the IVth International does not exist, no longer exists or has never existed. They speak of committees for the IVth International.

"La Verite" No. 1 (August 1940) through No 10 appears as "Bolshevik-Leninist Organ"; No. 11 (April 1941) through No 19 -- "Communist Revolutionary Organ"; No 20 (September 1941) through No 29 "Central Organ of the French Committees for the IVth International".

It is only in January, 1943 beginning with No 40 that "La Verite" becomes the "Organ of the P.O.I. (IVth International)" through No 59 in February, 1944. At this date it becomes "Organ of the P.C.I. (French Section of the IVth International)", starting again from No 1.

Thus these continuers abandoned the flag. It must be said that it was difficult to carry. It was attacked from all sides, from the right and from the left. And we are well justified in saying that neither politically, nor organisationally, nor administratively did our comrades leave the IVth International by leaving the P.O.I. It was the P.O.I. which abandoned both the program (renunciation of internationalism) and the IVth International itself.

Moreover, the present continuers have a strange conception of continuity since in a number of their texts one can read that the IVth International was re-built in 1945. No doubt this was the position adopted at the time to justify the past of those who had abandoned the flag during the worst hours, since it is the custom in these circles not to forgive the mistakes of one's adversaries ... but to pass over in silence those of one's associates.

It is thus that we should approach the problem. Who represented the "continuity" at the time? With what texts should the young Trotskyist militants of today claim continuity?

If they are content to resolve the question on formal grounds, then Frank is the "continuer". But "continuity" is a political fact. And all our past proves, in France at least, that we represent the continuity. We quite agree that this will be tested on the international level. And we should not let ourselves be abused by the blustering and the artificial Congresses of the I.C.

And the problem is not to find out which one of them or of us was right as individuals. Neither we, nor they, held responsible positions at the time. The problem is to find out where the political continuity lies, what were the correct positions. It is not enough to say that this or that position was false, that the men who took them are no longer here, etc.... The question to answer is how this could happen and how we can preserve ourselves from the same fate for the present and for the future.

What we described above is not a bolshevik organisation. And the O.C.I. which claims the continuity would take responsibility for a very bad heritage if it claims it politically. But it is just this domain that they are incapable of discussing. They prefer to remain, as their predecessors of 1943 or of 1945, on "administrative" grounds. The so-called "IVth International" from that time up until our days has known nothing but such struggles (recall the split of the Mexican Section in 1946, of the French section in 1952, of Posadas, or more recently between Frank and Pablo).

The Pabloites and the I.C. are, in fact, the right and the left wing of the same movement. Their internationalism is only the formal survival of the past and opens no perspective for the future.

We have chosen the narrowest and most difficult road, but it is the only one possible. At the end of the road we shall reach our goal, while they will have gone by the wayside.

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June 21st 1966

INTERNAL DOCUMENT

(This text can be shown to members of the O.C.I. and related organisations -- CLER; Revoltes; I.O.)

ABOUT THE P.O.I.

(Some more informations after the internal document of June 7, 1966 "To answer some lies")

WHAT WAS THE P.O.I. AND WHERE DID IT COME FROM?

In 1934 Trotsky recommended the entry of the French Trotskyist militants (Bolshevist-Leninist League) into the Socialist Party (S.F.I.O.). This experience lasted hardly any longer than a year and in October 1935 the Trotskyist faction was expelled.

Three months after its expulsion a split took place in the ranks of the partisans of the IVth International; of these two groups, one became the "Parti Communiste Internationaliste" (P.C.I.) led by Frank and Molinier, the other the "Parti Ouvrier Internationaliste" (P.O.I.) (Naville - Rous) recognized by the International Secretariat of the movement for the IVth International. A unification giving birth to the Parti Ouvrier Internationaliste (P.O.I.) took place on June 2, 1936. Four months later Frank and Molinier reformed the P.C.I. by splitting again, arguing that Trotsky used bureaucratic methods. These two groups carried on until the end of 1938 and the beginning of 1939.

The P.O.I. was thus the official representative of the Fourth International and the participation of the P.C.I. was rejected at the Founding Conference in September 1938. But although it was the French section of the IVth International, the P.O.I. was nonetheless an organisation with petty-bourgeois practices. Moreover the Founding Conference declared in its resolution on the "Tasks of the French Section":

"The deficiencies of the leadership of the P.O.I. manifest themselves by a "growing laxity of organisation and consequently a certain "revolutionary amateurism, the absence of a serious administration of the Party, of a national "treasury which functions normally, of a stable and self-critical editorial "staff for the "Lutte Ouvriere" (weekly of the P.O.I.)

.....
"The dues are not paid or are paid in a haphazard manner, without the supervision of the "leadership".

.....
"By trying to become a so-called "mass circulation newspaper" the "Lutte "Ouvriere" has become too superficial and even uninteresting. The stupid ideology held on this subject was such that some members of the party rose up "against the publication of articles of Trotsky considered sometimes as too "long and incomprehensible for the masses, sometimes as too violent against "the Stalinists" (our emphasis).

(- IVth International - Special issue - Sept-Oct 1938)

And the Conference, while noting "a certain improvement in the last few months", asked nonetheless that the newspaper put an end to the anonymity of the articles in order that the International be able to exercise a tighter control

over each one of the writers.

Moreover, the leadership of the P.O.I., from December 1936 on, tried to answer such reproaches by placing the blame on the leaders of the P.C.I. who during the period of unification (June - October 1936)

"voted against the publication in the "Lutte" of Trotsky's articles, declared "that Trotsky was "senile" ... to fight our campaign in favor of Trotsky, "they spoke of our "cult of the leader" in the spirit of ... Hitlerism". ("Lutte Ouvriere" No 23)

The big strikes of June, 1936, gave a certain boost to the P.O.I. In the course of the year it organized meetings which gathered more than 2,000 people in Paris, 1,500 in Lyons, 500 to 600 in other towns. The "Lutte Ouvriere" sold a total of a little more than 20,000 copies each month in December 1936 -- that is about 5,000 for each issue.

But it kept up this circulation little more than one year. From the beginning of 1938 on, although still entitled "weekly of the P.O.I.", the newspaper became in fact bi-monthly from January to March for lack of money. In October of the same year, the meeting commemorative of the Russian Revolution gathered only 400 people.

It was in the face of this situation that Trotsky pushed toward a fusion of the P.O.I. with the P.S.O.P. (Parti Socialiste Ouvrier et Paysan -- Workers' and Peasants' Socialist Party --) of Marceau Pivert, the former Revolutionary Left of the S.F.I.O. (French Socialist Party). On October 8, 1938, the Central Committee of the P.O.I. adopted a resolution of organic unity with Pivert's organisation. Its third Congress, held on January 15-16, 1939, esteemed that a fusion should finally take place. Letters were exchanged between Trotsky on one side, and Guerin and Pivert on the other. But the leadership of the P.S.O.P. did not accept the fusion, and decided that the Trotskyists could enter individually, and not as an organisation. The leadership of the P.O.I. refused. The militants in favor of this tactic then entered the P.S.O.P. (where they found the members of the ex P.C.I., which had dissolved in November, 1938, in order to be able to "enter" too). At the end of January the P.O.I. split. The "entrists" who supported the International then published a monthly, "La Voie de Lonine" (The Road of Lenin"), in which the comrades who are at the origin of our organisation wrote. The executive Committee of the IVth International broke with those who continued the P.O.I. The Central Committee of the P.O.I. then published a resolution on the subject:

"By publishing "Lutte Ouvriere", organ of the P.O.I., we are breaking the "discipline in regard to the politics and the decisions of the Executive Committee of the IVth International. Consequently the P.O.I. is no longer the "French Section of the IVth International.

.....
"Comrades, we are persuaded that in the months to come, the leaders of the "IVth International will sanction the error of their policy in France, by the "readmission of the P.O.I. as the French Section of the IVth International".

"-Paris, June 20, 1939 - The Central Committee of the P.O.I."

This declaration was published in the "Lutte Ouvriere" of July 10, 1939, which was entitled P.O.I. (Bolshevist-Leninist) instead of "French Section". This issue of "Lutte Ouvriere" carries "No 1 New Series".

But the Trotskyists did not stay for long in the P.S.O.P. Indeed at the first Congress of the Party, 28-29 May 1939, the leadership of the P.S.O.P. decided the expulsion of the Molinierist (ex-P.C.I.). As for those of the ex-P.O.I of the "Voie de Lenine" they were formally expelled by what remained of the Permanent Administrative Commission of the P.S.O.P. on November 20, 1939. But in fact the Trotskyists had already been investigated or imprisoned, and the P.S.O.P had become moribund since September 1st.

And when in September-October 1939 our comrades broke with the remnant of the ex-French Section, the International had already declared itself free of all responsibility for the French movement.

ERRATUM

In the internal bulletin of June 7, 1966, we wrote that "La Verite" from No 20 (September, 1941) through No 39 carried the sub-title: "Organe central des Comites Francais pour la IVeme Internationale" (Central Organ of the French Committees for the IVth International). In fact, it is only from No 20 through No 29 that this sub-title appears. From No 30 (April, 1942) through No 39 (December, 1942) "La Verite" carries: "Organe Central des Comites Francais de la IVeme Internationale" (Central Organ of the French Committees of the IVth International.)

DISCUSSION ON PRELIMINARY DRAFT THESES, "TASKS OF THE SPARTACIST LEAGUE"

(by the Ithaca Local Committee)

This is a transcript of a discussion on the draft document submitted to the London IC Conference by our delegation. The discussion began as part of an Ithaca local meeting as a point on the agenda. During the discussion it was decided that the ideas presented would be of interest to the comrades of the organization nationally and a transcript of the discussion should be submitted to the pre-conference discussion material.

The notes taken by the secretary, Liz G., were as close to verbatim as possible but many sentences have been reconstructed and it is hoped that the members of the Ithaca local will be indulgent to the inevitable distortions, especially in the first few sections.

Sec. 1

Doug: In paragraph 2, the criticism of peasant-based revolutions is one-sided and incomplete, and may turn off some of the semi-Maoists we want to reach. The paragraph needs more detail; the way it now reads it could be twisted into some kind of "great nation chauvinism" by dishonest opponants. We should point out how the struggle for power in the underdeveloped countries can aid revolutionary developments in the advanced countries. Also, we should point out that we do give military support to such movements.

Dave: We should point out that it is our duty to support these struggles as part of our work in raising consciousness in this country.

Liz: It should include a section on the mechanism of the colonial struggle and its relation to the advanced capitalist countries for markets, investment of surplus capital, etc. We have been lax in actually formulating this point in documents and such, and only Spartacist has the political line to cope with the question of the colonial world.

Doug: Actually, there are two concepts which are being confused here: 1. in one country, which class makes the revolution; 2. which countries are decisive for the world revolution. The Maoists don't claim that in the U.S. the national bourgeoisie will make the revolution.

Dee: Remember, though, that unless there is a revolution in the advanced countries the colonial countries remain tied to the Stalinist states.

Doug: It doesn't follow that because in this country it is the working class who will make the revolution, therefore in Cuba the working class must make the revolution. The Maoists are wrong about the colonial countries but their position isn't necessarily inconsistent.

Dee: Our attitude must take into account that people with illusions about the revolutionary capacity of the peasants are different from organized Maoists. We must combine an attitude of hostility to Stalinist hacks and apologists with efforts to recruit Maoist-Fidelista types who sincerely want to be revolutionist

Chris: I'd like to see us include a refutation of Teague's argument that the Vietnamese can't struggle in the cities because the Americans could just bomb them out of existence.

Sec. 2

Dave: The "principles" mentioned should be elaborated.

Doug: We should make available the important parts of the first four Congresses of the C.I., as not all the comrades have access to them.

Sec. 3

Question: Why raise the demand to rebuild the 4th International whereas Trotskyists did not demand "Rebuild the 3rd" but instead founded a new International?

Liz: Perhaps the phenomenon of Stalinism as a conscious agency of counter-revolution necessitated a new understanding of the balance of forces and the tasks of the vanguard.

Dee: Or the fact that the Comintern did exist in 1938, whereas the FI does not exist in 1966.

Daye: I don't agree with the last paragraph of the quote. New developments in theoretical understanding are required which are more than orthodoxy.

Dee: The difference, though, is in the application, tying in the basic theoretical outlook with new stages in the struggle.

Sec. 4

Okay as it stands.

Sec. 5

Doug: The last paragraph is tautology. It covers the fact that we have no economic analysis of specifics.

Liz: We should elaborate on the point that predictions on the intermediate level would require knowledge in advance of the outcome of battles that can be won or lost.

Mark: The organization needs qualified economists.

Doug: Trotsky's Criticism of the Draft Program is full of concrete predictions. Of course, a small group which does not yet have the cadre to intervene directly in class struggles does not have the necessary basis to make such predictions, but it is not theoretically impossible for a larger group. Our difference with Wohlforth is that we recognize that our ability to intervene at this time is small, but recognize that some intervention is a necessary part of propagandistic work.

Sec. 6

Doug: The formulation on expansion by powers of 10 is open to the criticism that we just sit back and watch. This is a completely dishonest misinterpretation, but one we should expect from various sorts of dishonest opponents. We should certainly elaborate on our concept of a propaganda group, and distinguish ourselves explicitly from the SWP conception.

Sec. 7

Doug: I'm kind of afraid to have this section in the document because none of us have the competence in economics to know if it's really right. In the meantime some of the phrases should be more detailed, and in the long run we must improve our knowledge of basic economics.

Mark: I disagree. I think this section stands as a general analysis of this stage of capitalism.

Doug: The section is impressionistic and should be put in a theoretical framework.

Dee: This section will be seriously questioned by anybody who has had one semester of bourgeois economics. The credit structure and interest rates are things which are considered good by the capitalists. Contradictions in the economy are things like income differentials.

Chris: I agree with Mark. We know enough of general Marxism to be able to include this section and defend it in discussion with others.

Doug: Bourgeois economists, like bourgeois historians, cannot use their own tools to predict the end of their system. Only we, as Marxists, can use the concepts of economics correctly because only we are equipped to see the logical conclusions from our knowledge. It is for this reason that competence in the field of economics is vital for us. But we have to sound like we know what we're talking about. How, for example, do the gains of the USSR hurt the American economy?

Dee: Economics must be viewed in political terms. We can safely predict some dissatisfaction resulting from economic causes among some sections of the population and we can utilize this when it occurs, without necessarily being able to predict it beforehand. Although we do need education in economics, we can point out the economic situation today and make political, non-economic predictions on the basis of it.

Mark: The assertions in this section are not that bold. It is clear that the intent is just to point out some contradictions in the economic system and make a few hesitant predictions.

Liz: I think Dee's point is very well taken.

Helene: We can make deductions from the actions of the bourgeoisie; we can use the knowledge that they are not going to adopt suicidal tactics and infer a lot of things from their actions. I do think the first few sentences and the last one in this section are amateurish.

Sec. 8

Doug: We should really expand this whole section. PL at its Conference really detailed its approach to the unions. Of course, a lot of that is completely phony, but there is a real need for a codification of Trotskyist perspectives and tactics for work in the unions. I have a whole list of things I think should be included in this document -- what our approach is on a number of points and on points where we have a definite position, spell out why. Some of these points are situations in which I honestly would not know what to do. On others, we have definite answers and a rationale behind them, which I think should be made explicit. We don't want to pretend, like PL does, that in the near future we will have control of lots of unions, but we should show that we know what to do in a union situation. As soon as it becomes feasible I would like to see a post of Union Secretary added to the N.O. In the document itself, a lot of these points would be valuable information for new and inexperienced comrades.

- 1) On blocs with non-revolutionary elements, when and when not to form them, who and who not to bloc with. (PL, for example, has a specific position in favor of a "center-left coalition" to attack the AFL-CIO leadership.)
- 2) Recognition of the danger inherent in trade union work. There is a constant pressure to accommodate, to be a militant trade unionist, not a communist.
- 3) Do we orient toward Stalinist unions, young workers, etc?
- 4) Do we favor sending middle-class kids into the unions?
- 5) Are we for independence from the AFL-CIO of unions in which we have people working?
- 6) If we had a majority in a union, would we be in favor of it leaving the AFL-CIO, forming a second federation?
- 7) Do we have any special approach to women workers?
- 8) Are we against using the bourgeois courts to force union democracy and non-discrimination?
- 9) Are we for using the courts to protect ourselves? (like will we call the cops if we have to in order to protect ourselves from Stalinist physical attack?)

- 10) We should be explicit in answer to the question of why we call for the building of another reformist labor party, how revolutionists use this demand, the difference between "independent" politics and a labor party.
- 11) When do we seek union offices without our full communist program and what is the minimum program for doing so?
- 12) Are certain things permissible in a union which are not otherwise, for example if the union bureaucracy supports the Vietnam war and some militant rank-and-file call for U.N. elections, what do we do?
- 13) There should be some mention of white-collar unionism.

Doc: Another point would be our attitude if the international union smashed a caucus or expelled the local union.

Holone: Also, we might include something about professional unions.

Doc: I think Doug's proposed additions to this section would be very valuable and would show our seriousness. The question of how to deal with racist or reactionary workers is very important. We should pay attention to trade union papers and studies on unions, union democracy, etc.

Chris: I would like to see something included about dual unionism and the claim that it raises consciousness. We should have a long-term perspective on priorities of the anti-war movement, trade unions, etc. -- where to concentrate our energies and our cadres.

Dave: We should establish tactical priorities.

Sec. 9

Doug: This section should include our attitude toward the police, our strategy and tactics on how to achieve housing gains, what issues around which to base independent political action and form independent political organizations. We should specifically attack the attitude of U-JOIN, which puts forward the demand for a guaranteed annual income instead of jobs for all. Concretely, how and around what demands is a riot turned into class struggle? And what would be the "transitional organization" mentioned? About the South, we have only one organizing committee in the Deep South and two very marginal ones in Texas. The quote that "no other organization has any base at all" is wrong because Progressive Labor does have some kind of base there. The implication that we are going to "equip" the Southern struggle is arrogant -- our demands of a Labor Party, the Vietnam issue, trade unionization, strikes, self-defense were advanced five years ago but now we have very little to say to Southern militants. There have been a lot of changes and SNCC is now recognizing a lot of things. We should explicitly say that we are ignorant of the Southern civil rights struggle and that it is part of our tasks to learn. We should include our attitude to the SWP slogan of federal troops to the South and to Black Nationalism, and also the Freedom Now Party and other similar phenomena. Also, we should point out that the problems in Mississippi are national and need national demands and organizations; this is a point on which we have something to say which is not generally recognized by the civil rights movement. Another new development which needs analysis on our part is the current trend of SNCC toward independent politics concurrently with Black Nationalism (the Black Panther Party.)

Dave: We are the only group in the South now.

Doug: This document is supposed to serve as a perspective for the next period. We are about equal to PL in the South now.

Chris: We are a small group with only a minimum connection to any struggle. Perhaps we should point out that we correctly called for that program when it was not accepted by even the most advanced in the civil rights movement, and admit that we must develop other programmatic points and connect ourselves with the struggle to the maximum possible extent.

Dee: I really doubt that the Southern civil rights movement has adopted that program. SNCC's statement on the Vietnam war was, as a matter of fact, rather wishy-washy. We should commend these sections for their good points, but hardly conclude that this stage is over in the South.

Helene: It's a cliché to say that people are tired and discouraged and don't know where to go. In fact, it wasn't until 1960 that the movement began to go forward and adopted the tactic of sit-ins. The next thing we have to say after "Build a Labor Party" is "Make the Revolution." There must be some points in between.

Mark: The vanguard really ought to be able to see the next stage. It is true that the most advanced elements have adopted those demands and we ought to have something else to say to them.

Chris: There may be independent political action but no labor party, although there may be a feeling that a labor party is needed. Perhaps what we need is to be more specific and urge positive steps be taken by anti-war activists and advanced white workers. Perhaps the demand "Form Committees for a Labor Party" and a national network of such committees.

Doug: The advanced SNCC member can simply say, and I think he'd be right, "If the white workers formed a labor party we SNCC members would join but in the meantime what can we do except organize the only people who will listen to us? How can we link up the struggles when there's nothing to link up with? We don't need to be convinced of the necessity, but organizing whites just hasn't worked when we've tried it. If you can organize the white workers and form your poor white party, we'll be glad to link up." About all we can do is urge that they not take a programmatic position against whites, but that's all.

Chris: I don't really understand your position, Doug. I think you are over-estimating the present level of consciousness of the Southern militant.

Doug: And another thing. As I remember, Dee, the SNCC statement against the war was pretty good -- said the U.S. is lying when it professes concern for the colored people of the world.

Dee: The SNCC statement was third-worldy. Sort of colored versus white in Vietnam. As a demand, we should call for organizing black trade unionists into a party for local power struggles, a labor party which would be primarily black in this period, with the position that the fight for jobs will attract white militants.

Liz: I don't think I could add anything to what Dee said. It isn't a question of taking existing radical sections of the population and getting them to support each other's demands, but of building a struggle for demands which can unite black and white workers through their common need to struggle for these demands.

Sec. 11

Dee: We should take cognizance of the change in line which is being prepared by the U.S. -- preparation for extrication from a difficult position.

Doug: This section gives the impression that LBJ is making a mistake, then goes on to talk about the great successes of American imperialism, then about a split in the power structure. The talk about Maoist betrayals is flippant. The only "worst possible policy" for Johnson would be immediate withdrawal. The NLF sell-out stuff is the Stalinism question again. We're just taking the most far-out and left-wing position that the NLF will sell out again, that's why they're fighting. We'd better prove it. Well, all that is minor. Here's another more important point: does support to the NLF mean that individuals should support the NLF or the anti-war movement as a whole? Do we demand withdrawal or if we can get it do we push for support to the NLF? Or a united front with no minimum position? As regards the SWP, simply denouncing the

"Black G.I.'s" demand as "absurd" isn't enough of a refutation. Furthermore... I haven't been told to burn my student deferment privileges. We don't demand that better-paid workers give up their better wages. Do we call for individuals to give up their deferments? I'm not sure student deferments are really so much resented by non-students. This last paragraph is self-congratulation for our weakest position. One more thing -- the SWP makes this point, but it's true anyway -- we do encourage struggle and mass movements, so we ought not to formulate our positions as if we were simply raiding. Also, what does it mean to direct the anti-war movement to the working class, that only the working class can stop the war or that only the working class can build socialism, which is the only end to war? We ought to get clear on what we mean there. One sentence is inadequate for the whole question of multi-issuism.

Dave: The formulation on the falling dominoes is unclear. The SWP line is indeed classless: "If the people knew the truth the war would end."

(There was general agreement that the formulation was confusing but the general point -- that in the light of the temporary stabilization of the colonial world for capitalism, the Vietnam war becomes less necessary for the U.S. -- correct.)

Chris: The question of the demand for victory for the NLF is definitely unclear.

Helene: Likewise, the 2-S demand, on individuals, the government, etc.

Liz: On the NLF, they are Stalinists and given the right balance of forces they will sell out. I think we ought to have a motion or something about 2-S, since we've been acting on our position for a term.

Motion by Dee: That the position on student deferments should be to call for the anti-war movement to demand that the government abolish the 2-S classification and against individuals surrendering their deferments.

(The motion was withdrawn, as Mark volunteered to outline a statement of our position.)

Helene: This demand is important, as it raises consciousness in the movement and points out that the anti-war movement must recognize the inadequacy of a purely student movement.

Sec. 12 and 13

Liz: I think some of this stuff is sheer nonsense.

Doug: It's arrogant for this kook to write such stuff about these people, some of whom are pretty good; it's crackpotism. Insofar as it is a serious attempt, it's pretty one-sided. New Leftists have worked out to some pretty good things; a kind of internationalism, an attention to at least some sections of the working class, a dislike for "liberalism" and, for at least some of them, a partial recognition of the real nature of the Democratic Party. This section of the document is not a systematic critique of political points.

Dee: We will have to use this document. We can't subordinate the document to conciliation of one individual.

Helene: We should write another statement and ask that it be substituted for this section. We should be capable of doing it; this has been our arena in Ithaca.

Sec. 14

Doug: This section could be rewritten so as to have much more effect on PLers. We have a devastating analysis of why PL can't make the revolution in Indonesia, but such an analysis we don't have for PL in the United States. On the surface, they look okay. They object to the CP as reformist and reject Democratic Party politics. We have something to say about PL, but unlike our analysis of the SWP we haven't said it systematically. Also, the document ought to point out that adventurism and an attitude of "get rich quick" has been rejected by PL and the document is two or three years behind in that aspect. We should also include to protect ourselves against slander that what we are interested in is building a

revolutionary party with a correct program and if all of PL adopted this correct program we would certainly fuse with them, to defend ourselves against the lie of "splitters and wreckers."

Dee: The document is correct about PL in New York, which really has to be fought in exactly this way. Maybe it isn't correct for the Bay Area; perhaps we need some kind of half-way formulation.

Chris: I guess we don't really understand PL. It wouldn't seem possible for two sections of the same organization to be so different.

Dave: We could point out the confusion over May 2. Also, PL doesn't see the need for building an international movement to prevent things like Indonesia.

Doug: We all know what's wrong with PL, a lot of things are wrong with it. What we need is an analysis of the basic points which cause these things.

Dee: Perhaps the West Coast PLers don't have such fundamental differences with us. We should pin them down on Trotskyism.

Doug: In the Bay Area the PLers in Berkeley are friendly and empirical, "left-centrist." We know that they can't make the revolution. You'll disagree on Indonesia, 1928, 1937 (just making up years) but it's very difficult to codify these points. With the SWP-YSA we have concrete analyses and can really hit them hard on every point. Sure, we know that through time there is a tremendous difference in practice between Trotskyists and Stalinists, but we must detail why they must be Trotskyists. We need more than horror stories about PL sectarianism and abuses. We attack the SWP on documents, analyses, pop. frontism, basic approach to anti-war, etc.

Helene: We are in a weak position in relation to PL because of our own lack of strength and resulting weakness in practice. We must have a strong enough theoretical argument to convince these people to join Spartacist. We certainly can't do this by our "activism", because on that they've got us.

Dave: Such groups -- the OROs -- are going to continue to exist for a long time. We must recognize the necessity for patient work. A specific point, we should elaborate and concretize what we mean by "polarize the majority" of the SWP and how we intend to do it.

Doug: The past line of our organization was to expect a left-wing opposition to grow up within the SWP majority. In fact this has not materialized. The YSA has grown up in Pabloism without ever knowing Trotskyism.

Dee: What did Jim mean by we are through orienting to people over 30?

Liz: For a group like ASOC or the Foxites, we could expect to win over some of the young people, but people who have been in politics for many years are unlikely to significantly change the things they have believed all this time.

Doug: We seem to be able to pick up isolated individuals, but expecting splits or left oppositions to form has just been overoptimistic.

Liz: A couple of years ago, if the SWP had had the right line on PL, we could have polarized a chunk out of PL, if we had been in a position to get into joint work with them before they hardened up against Trotskyists. Also, fusion with ACFI would have greatly increased our power to attract sections of other groups to us.

(There was a general feeling that there should be more detail on other organizations. Dee also suggested a specific analysis of SDS in the section on the New Left.)

Sec. 15

Doug: It is a correct policy now to concentrate on the most advanced section of the radical movement, but we should recognize that at a future stage we'll be able to put out publications on a less advanced level. This is part of our perspectives and should be included in the document.

Dave: Even now we could have short articles on a lower level, and also leaflets or articles commenting on things from the Times.

Doug: Also there's the concept of national leaflets or leaflets printed by the N.O. for use by the locals.

Liz: We should mention the Spanish-language publication.

Doug: The importance of internal education should be emphasized in the document, and educational and topical pamphlets. For example, things like "What is the New Left?" or "Does Labor Have a Future?" We should reprint the Mage pamphlet on Hungary.

Dee: How about something on the Woman question?

Sec. 16

Okay as it stands.

Sec. 17

Doug: Our new people are not capable of tactical decisions without at least a few years' experience. We should include that the N.O. must be familiar with problems of such locals and be ready to give advice on tactics.

Chris: The best suggestion to remedy this is reorganization into regional centers.

Dave: Some tactical advice should be codified in this document.

Doug: There should be some kind of national Educational Commission or at least a literature service for isolated locals.

Sec. 18 and 19

Okay as it stands.

General

Doug: We need an organizer's handbook for new comrades, which would deal with such points as how to make picket signs, hold meetings, release press releases, keep files, etc. We badly need an internal discussion bulletin. I think our general recruitment policy has been too broad. We need to recognize that we are a petty-bourgeois organization and that social composition of this kind is a danger. All of us have deficient consciousness and attitudes.

Dee: I strongly agree. In this connection internal education is very important, and of course involvement in struggle. We must all recognize our own weaknesses and the weaknesses of the organization, in order to combat them.

(There was general agreement on this point. The discussion of the document being completed, the rest of the agenda was tabled and the meeting was adjourned.)

Ithaca, New York

26 June 1966

(transcribed by L.G. on 30 July 1966
for pre-conference discussion bulletin)

AMENDMENT to "Theses...on Tasks of the S.L." -
on the question of the press
by Chris & Dee Kinder

III. SOME OF OUR DIRECT TASKS

15.

DELETE para. #1 from "The SL recognizes..." to end (of para. #1.)

SUBSTITUTE:

The press must be viewed as an instrument of intervention in the class struggle rather than a commentary upon it. As such it must be on a high enough level as to fill the need of the various sectors central to our aims--the activist and radical youth, militants in the Southern Civil Rights Struggle, ghetto Negroes, key sections of the working class, the international movement--which can be reached by our ideas at this stage.

The press is our major and most important means of intervention in struggle at the present time. As an organization seeking to become an effective propaganda group, the SL must recognize that a national press is ineffectual and next to worthless if frequency and regularity are sacrificed or under-emphasized in order to achieve maximum quality (in both the editorial and technical senses) and comprehensiveness. The reasonable goal of a monthly press has been too long delayed and the quality and comprehensiveness that have been achieved have been negated by the untimeliness of the issues. The lack of frequency and regularity has prevented the development of a continuing readership in any of the sectors mentioned above, and this has made the press next to worthless as a vehicle for intervention in struggle. The SL must at once establish a press policy devoted to the achievement of maximum propaganda intervention. This means that timeliness, frequency and regularity must be our primary immediate goals; editorial quality (beyond the requirement of clear expression of the positions and analyses of the SL), superior reproduction methods, and comprehensiveness must be considered desirable goals to be achieved as soon as resources permit once a regular, monthly press has been achieved.

While we must be careful that the burden of production of our publication does not ever extend the capacities of the organization and cause other vital activities to be by-passed, we must recognize that the opposite problem now exists. The lack of regularity and timeliness of the press has forced members to take time away from field-work activity to produce propaganda needed for their intervention. In addition, members-at-large and isolated members have been hindered in their work due to the lack of a press with which to introduce themselves and their organization to the sectors of struggle in their areas. A frequent and timely press would encourage more active intervention in local arenas by members and make their intervention more effective. This in turn should encourage more members in the field to write for the press.

24 August 1966

PERSPECTIVES ON OUR PUBLIC PRESS

(By Mark Tishman)

The Trotskyist movement originated as a left-opposition within the world Communist movement, while the analysis of the counter-revolutionary nature of Stalinism represents the unique contribution of Trotskyism to Marxist theory. It is therefore natural for the Trotskyist movement to think of itself primarily as a revolutionary opposition to Stalinism. Because Stalinist organizations have almost always been much larger than Trotskyist ones, the Trotskyist movement has traditionally oriented toward winning over members of Stalinist organizations on the basis of a criticism of their politics and underlying political philosophy. Where social democratic parties have been important, a similar orientation is usually made to them, although generally to a lesser extent. In other words, the Trotskyist movement has generally attempted to recruit members of other ostensibly revolutionary or socialist organizations by demonstrating that these organizations are not really revolutionary or socialist. It is the contention of this paper that such an orientation for the Spartacist in the United States today would be incorrect and can lead to dangerous sectarianism. The most significant fact about the American political scene today is the existence of an active and growing left, while the official socialist organizations, even the avowedly reformist Socialist Party, remains small, both absolutely and relative to the rest of the Left. The main components of the Left today are students, young intellectual radicals, a solid strata of black civil rights militants, particularly in the South, and potentially the broader Negro masses. The two most important organizations in the American Left today are SNCC and SDS, neither maintaining a socialist program.

Although there are revolutionary socialist groups which are larger and organizationally superior to us, there is certainly none which is dominant, in the sense that the CP was dominant until 1956, or on a much lower level, the S. P. - Y. P. S. L. in the later 1950's and early 1960's. It would be no exaggeration to say that a sizable percentage of all the new recruits joining any group calling itself socialist in the past few years would have joined the Spartacist had we been capable of approaching them effectively. For these reasons the principal task of the Spartacist in this period is to win Left-Liberals, open-ended radicals and simple, class - militants to the elementary principles of socialism, a task which has traditionally been the province of Stalinist or social democratic organizations.

It is clear from even a cursory reading of the Spartacist that our perspective has been completely different. Of the 88 pages making the 6 issues of Spartacist, 16 have been direct polemics against the S. W. P., 8 attacks on the Pabloite position on Cuba, 12 attacks on the Mao-Pablo theory of the colonial revolution, 5 on Maoist China, 4 on the historical Stalin-Trotsky struggle, 1 a direct polemic against P. L., 3 on other aspects of Pabloism, 3 on international Trotskyist affairs, 1 on A. S. O. C., and 4 in polemics with Healy-Wohlforth. This leaves out the correspondence section, devoted largely to breast beating and organizational polemics. Even the excellent articles on Harlem in No. 2 and 3, concluded with an attack on the S. W. P.

Briefly the basic function of the Spartacist has been to engage in a series of polemics against other "revolutionary Marxist organizations", primarily the SWP and PL and generally on the basis of their formal ideological positions, Pablosim and Maoism respectively, with particular reference to the post-war development of Stalinism and the colonial revolution. Spartacist #6 was not even graced with this level of political generality.

Although we have no written statement on public press policy, I have received a deliberate and systematic rationale for this policy in conversations with Comrade Robertson. Given Jim Robertson's position in the Spartacist, I feel justified in regarding his views as authoritative and will devote most of the rest of this paper to criticizing his rationale. The following are reasons for our press policy so given and my criticisms thereof.

1. OUR PRINCIPLE TASK IN THIS PERIOD IS TO WIN OVER THE VANGUARD OF THE CLASS AND THEREFORE, WE CONCENTRATE ON THOSE PEOPLE AND GROUPS WHO ARE CLOSEST TO US POLITICALLY.

It is important to distinguish between a genuine class vanguard and a sect, whose existence is due largely to external forces (ACFL, Healy; PL, Communist China; SWP, a remnant of the Trotskyist movement). One should avoid a mechanical approach to this question, assuming those groups with the most correct formal position are more of a vanguard organization than others. This is particularly true of the Trotskyist movement where much of the program is of a traditional character.

Most of the "revolutionary vanguard" have been recruiting on an activist and simplistic anti-American imperialist line and their membership is not subjectively more revolutionary than most non-affiliated student radicals. There exists a nebulous relationship between the subjective beliefs of the members and the official doctrines of the organization to which they belong. In many cases the fact that people are in one of these organizations rather than another or none at all is purely arbitrary (eg., PL's recruitment from their Cuba trips). Conversely, many black civil rights militants best represented by SNCC, have shown a far higher degree of self discipline and dedication, recognition of the need to develop mass roots, a feeling for the reality of the class structure, and generally greater political seriousness than any of the Marxist-Leninist vanguard, with their largely student and middle class membership. These qualities are more important in revolutionary cadres than a passing interest in Trotskyist theory or the colonial revolution which in many cases is simply the product of an academic milieu rather than a genuine commitment to internationalism.

Nor does the fact that these organizations supposedly share our basic political philosophy make their membership more conducive to our ideas. On the contrary, because they belong to smaller and more aggressive groups, they have a greater sense of organizational loyalty and hostility towards competing groups than members of avowedly blanket organizations, like SDS, SNCC, and the various anti-war movements. Contacts with potentially dissent members of other "revolutionary" organizations can be made personally or through a special press policy (see suggestion 4). These groups are small enough so that such a tactic can be efficient.

2. THE BANKRUPTCY OF PABLOISM AND MAOISM AS INDICATED BY THE SERIES OF WORLD CRISES OVER THE PAST PERIOD WILL LEAD TO SERIOUS SPLITS IN THE "MARXIST-LENINIST ORGANIZATIONS". AND OUR CONCENTRATION ON THESE ISSUES IN THE PRESS WILL ENABLE US TO GAIN FROM THESE SPLITS.

The low theoretical level of these organizations makes it very unlikely that a serious split will occur over the failure of Maoism to explain what is going on in the world. If PL were a genuine Maoist organization, that is, one bound together by a belief in Maoism to explain as an operational political philosophy, the Algerian coup, the Indonesian massacre, Castro's attack on China, and the current Chinese purge, coming one on top of the other, should have split PL from stem to stern, as should Ben Bella's fall and Castro's attack on Trotskyism have done to the SWP. They did not because, except for a handful of hard-factionalists, few PLrs or SWPers have this kind of commitment to Maoism or Pabloism. Indicatively, the only major splits in PL and the SWP since the formation of the Spartacist were the result of their organizational dishonesty -- the SWP's antics at the Washington anti-war conference, and PL's dissolution of M2M. As yet the Spartacist has made no gains from these splits.

3. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SPARTACIST AS THE LEADING MARXIST-LENINIST GROUP IN THIS COUNTRY, OR AT LEAST THE AUTHORITATIVE TROTSKYIST GROUP IS A NECESSARY PREREQUISITE FOR SIGNIFICANT GAINS OUTSIDE EXISTING REVOLUTIONARY CIRCLES.

There is ample evidence to reject this notion quite summarily. Britain supports four reasonably healthy Trotskyist groups, all of whom have better working class bases than PL and SWP; France also supports a number of functioning Trotskyist groups. One of them, V. O., has co-existed 25 years with the official Fourth International and still managed to develop a sizable industrial base. A classic refutation of Robertson's thesis are the Bolsheviks themselves who did not destroy the Mensheviks as a major political party until after they took state power! In a good period most groups tend to recruit from the broader movement. If anything, the relationship between general recruitment and recruitment from competing organizations is the reverse. The ability to recruit from non-revolutionary circles acts as a strong magnet on other groups, and their cadres might join, when they would not join a small group of "hards" having similar positions.

4. IN THE PRESENT PERIOD A LIMITED NUMBER OF PEOPLE WILL JOIN THE REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT. OTHER THINGS BEING EQUAL, THEY WILL JOIN THE LARGEST OF THOSE GROUPS CALLING THEMSELVES REVOLUTIONARY. THEREFORE, ONE OF OUR MAJOR TASKS IS TO DIFFERENTIATE OURSELVES FROM ALL OTHER "MARXIST-LENINIST" GROUPS.

While some definite upper limit probably exists, the notion of some definite quota divided up between the existing "revolutionary groups", coming into the revolutionary movement, irrespective of the actions these groups take towards the broader Left, is untenable. Few people say, "I'm going to become a revolutionary" and then hunt around for a group to join. They are won over and the

total recruitment to the revolutionary movement is very much dependent upon the actions of the revolutionary groups, their ability to intervene and to present their positions in a way that answers the problems of non-revolutionaries. The underlying premise of this paper is that the actual Marxist-Leninist movement is small relative to the people who would be willing to join and we could recruit a number of such people if our propaganda and other activities were oriented toward them. Our success at Cornell indicated that our politics can be attractive to the average college radical.

Implicit in this justification for our press policy is the rather surprising notion that our position on the American question is so similar to most other revolutionary groups, that, if we did not spend most of our time denouncing Mao and Fidel, the Spartacist would be indistinguishable from PL or SWP. On the two major issues facing the American left, our positions are almost unique. We reject the idea that the Negro movement is a civil rights or a minority rights struggle and also all forms of Black Nationalism, and seek to transform the Negro movement into the conscious vanguard of the American working class fighting for demands around which the entire class can unite. We also systematically oppose the notion of students as a special revolutionary strata and seek to give them the need for a working class orientation.

Equally important, this concept seems to indicate an essentially negative approach to recruitment. Even if we manage to convince some people that all other "revolutionary" organizations are rotten, they still will not join us unless they believe that we are good. This is particularly true in a country where unaffiliated radicalism is the rule. While Comrade Robertson is quite right in contending that we cannot lead the masses at present, the ability to recruit good cadres, people with experience and authority in mass movements (I am particularly thinking of black civil rights militants) will depend upon:

a) demonstrating that we are potentially capable of leading the masses should our numbers and circumstances allow;

b) that the activities we engage in today have some direct link to the building of a mass revolutionary party and are not simply biding the time until better objective circumstances arise.

One of the important ways in which we can do this is to have a press which demonstrates an understanding of the character and problems of the existing mass movement. The Spartacist should be, among other things, an articulate propaganda sheet against the right-wing leadership of these various mass movements, and provide theoretical ammunition for any left opposition. I am not suggesting that we act as PR man or lawyers for the latest left leader in the Negro struggle in the manner of the SWP, but rather that we provide a solid base of Marxist analysis on the issues involved. A propos of this whole question, it will be an easily detected piece of double standardry on our part to lambast the New Left for ignoring the working class and heralding the cause of student radicalism and then telling those who join us that our principal task in this period is to develop the political sophistication of a veritable handful of intellectuals.

Closely related to this question are the questions whether the Spartacist should be considered solely as a supplement to fraction work and whether immediate recruitment should be regarded as our sole criterion for success. One of the

important characteristics of our press is that it travels in much wider circles than do our comrades. And in a certain sense it should reflect the public image of American Trotskyism. We should certainly seek to develop as wide a reputation as possible within the Negro ghetto. There are many areas where our comrades may do valuable work which will not bear immediate fruit. I am thinking particularly of the southern civil rights movement which has mass roots and is going to be around for a while. We may have just a few comrades working for a number of years who, however, have a wide periphery of contacts. And in a period of crisis they may win over significant sections of the movement. To engage in this type of politics we will need a public organ which is geared to a broader audience.

5. OUR UNIQUE CONTRIBUTION TO MARXIST THEORY LIES IN THE UNDERSTANDING OF STALINISM AND THE COLONIAL REVOLUTION. ANYTHING WE MIGHT SAY ON OTHER QUESTIONS WOULD PROBABLY ONLY DUPLICATE THE POSITION OF ONE OR ANOTHER GROUP.

The Spartacist is not an experimental drama society. The question of the uniqueness of our theory on this or that issue is subordinate to putting forth the proper political position on the most important issues in the class struggle at that time. Most of the problems facing the revolutionary movement are created by its objective place within capitalist society and therefore almost all of the conflicts that arise will be similar to those which have been faced by the socialist movement. Precisely what differentiates a propaganda group from a literary group is its ability to present and propagate its ideas so that they have the maximum social effect.

Secondly, the idea that our politics is the aggregate of positions on various important issues, eg., the trade union movement, the Negro struggle, Stalinism, the Democratic Party, etc., is false. What we have to offer as revolutionary Marxists is not that we have a uniquely correct analysis of everything from the Watts riots to the price of copper on the world market next month, but that we have a total world view based upon a socialist program that is capable of weighting and integrating the infinitude of elements that constitute reality into a unique theoretical construct. The class struggle exists objectively. This means that various people will come to the correct conclusion on this or that aspect of their social experience. Most of the citizens of Watts do not need us to tell them that Martin Luther King is little more than a front man for the fuzz. Likewise, many a college student will come to the conclusion that American foreign policy in the under developed countries is reactionary on the basis of his own reading. What the Spartacist offers these people is not that we reject many more aspects of the capitalistic society than they do, that we oppose Mao and Fidel as well as opposing the Southern Christian leaders and William Fulbright. What we offer these people is a knowledge of the logical conclusions of these attitudes, a synthesis of the diverse elements of the class struggle, both theoretically and actively, and the will to transform these partial rejections of capitalist society into a successful socialist movement.

The point that I am making on our press is not that the questions of the colonial revolution and the post-war development of Stalinism are not important, although I think we have to demonstrate that they are important and not simply assume that

it is obvious to anyone who does not think so not worth wasting time on, but that in dealing with these questions in an almost exclusively polemical framework we restrict its broader applicability. Form and context are important in propaganda. Many of the most pernicious anti-social aspects of Maoism and Pabloism (eg., the working class in the advanced capitalistic countries is hopelessly corrupt, the leading socialist force in the world today are the peasant masses in the colonial countries under eliteist leaderships, etc.) are shared by many people who have never heard of Michel Pablo or Progressive Labor. In one important sense, the revisionist character of these doctrines stems precisely from the fact that they are accommodations to various modes within the prevalent bourgeois ideology. This is quite obvious in the case of SWP and in a somewhat more subtle way with regard to PL also. Important theoretical differences have strong social roots and would manifest themselves in innumerable ways both organizationally and non-organizationally. In the early 1950's a number of Trotskyists no doubt day dreamt about how great it would be if somehow the CP collapsed and the SWP would be the sole bearer of the Leninist mantle in the United States. However, in 1956 when the CP did collapse, the position of American Trotskyism did not qualitatively improve while many of the worst aspects of American Stalinism continued in other forms. Few comrades including Jim Robertson will disagree with the above points. However our excessively organizational propaganda approach ("Our business is destroying competing organizations.") tends towards the illusion that the destruction of this or that competing group is equivalent to destroying their bad politics. Our business is not primarily the destruction of PL or even of organizational Maoism, however useful that might be, but the defeat of those ideas and attitudes that make ideological accommodations to capitalist society, of the type represented by Maoism and Pabloism possible.

The Spartacist reads like the Talmud. It is dry, didactic, and often casuistic. It should become more readable and less boring. Ideally, the Spartacist should be a paper that can be read, with interest and value, by a high school kid on his first anti-war demonstration, a Harlem housewife, or an experienced civil rights militant.

SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS ON THE PUBLIC PRESS.....

1.) The basic character of the Spartacist should be expositional rather than organizationally polemical. That is, it should deal basically with issues, and mention competing organizations only as illustrative of incorrect positions. This is the exact opposite of the present policy, which concentrates on attacking other "revolutionary" groups and uses their bad political positions as examples of how basically no-good-rotten, they are.

A useful format for the Spartacist would be to have in each issue a long, in depth analysis of the various issues facing the American Left (reforming the Democratic Party, Perspectives for the Peace Movement, Perspectives for the Southern civil rights movement, Black Nationalism, etc.) These articles should seek to be both a comprehensive Marxist analysis of the particular issues involved and topically applicable. Although slightly simplistic and patronizing, Steve Fox's article on the anti-war movement and its allies, written after the Washington Conference, serves as a good model for this type of propaganda.

2.) We should minimize direct polemical attacks against other "Marxist-Leninist" groups. This particularly goes for this stupid and politically meaningless debate with Healy-Wchlforth. It is not necessary to write a long defense and counter-attack anytime any of these groups attack us in print. It is expensive in both time and money and our valuable press space gives the impression that we care more about the opinions of these groups than they deserve. These attacks should be answered tersely, contemptuously and once, if at all.

This suggestion does not hold where conflicts with these groups occur in an important arena of our mass work, such as the Fifth Avenue Peace Parade business and the Washington anti-war conference. Although, even here, a sense of balance should be maintained.

3.) A definite attempt should be made to make the Spartacist more lively and readable; journalistic devices to this end might include interviews (one of our Chicago comrades might do a straight interview with one of the anti-police rioters), and straight descriptive journalism ("Shooting it out With the Klan").

ON OUR NON-PUBLIC PRESS

4.) One justification for our press policy is the need to contact the various groups splitting from the SWP and the Barton-Brown ASOC faction. To the extent that discussions on specific Trotskyist issues with them would be useful, I suggest an inexpensively produced semi-public discussion bulletin devoted to this purpose. Ideally, it would include us, the Fox group, the Frasier group, ASOC left, and any individuals considered worth hearing from. If a multi-lateral discussion bulletin cannot be arranged, we may try to establish bilateral ones. This can be used both as internal education and material for contacts.

P.O.Box 3061
Eureka, Calif.

11 Sept. 1965

To: Spartacist Resident Editorial Board
P.O. Box 1377 G.P.O.
New York, N.Y. 10001

Dear Comrades:

I have been much disturbed by your action in expelling Charles M. Smith. However and in spite of the action I am still doing my very best to work for Spartacist and the working class.

I have headed my address as being at Eureka, Calif. as I intend to return there real soon but at this writing I am staying at the home of Ron B. in Los Angeles. We have just completed a leaflet for the Watts situation; copy of which you shall have at once and I hope it meets your approval.

I have talked extensively with Ron on the Smith case and the, to my mind, correct move in getting use of the Madelyn Murray machine. I haven't the slightest doubt but that the press comes to Spartacist if we'll just pull together and overlook small weaknesses of members. All members have weaknesses and strong points. If we're to succeed we must learn to work together and make use of the good points of each member. I would like to have the privilege of examining or cross-examining each member who accuses Smith of weaknesses and I think I can convince any fair minded jury that the complainant is no better than the accused. In other words, let he who is without sin cast the first stone.

Shane Mage wrote on October 14, 1962 on page 48 of Marxist Bulletin No 2 that the Revolutionary Tendency was not yet organized along democratic-centralist lines. If I'm wrong in believing Mage, please correct me. It is my understanding that this is still the case. Ron here agrees with me on this point. If such is the situation, why should you assume such strong central authority at this time? Furthermore, Smith is absolutely correct in his statement, in effect, that each member gives all he's able to give of his life, time, money and sacrifice to Spartacist and as long as it's above the minimum requirements, one remains a member.

I'm not saying that Smith did everything in an ideal manner. Please tell us who does everything to perfection? I'd like to do some soul-searching of that particular individual before a fair minded grouping. We need to retain some anarchistic spirit among our membership or we shall descend to the level of a bunch of sheep and hero worshipping Stalinists. Anyone who has lived thru the Stalinist period with his eyes open realizes that that period has given a permanent black eye to such so called democratic-centralism--it was all centralism--we must avoid such a situation in Spartacist even at the risk of expulsion ourselves.

Anyone who assumes the position of czar in a revolutionary movement must be willing to accept the dangers which are always possible to the leadership or even the membership of such a movement. If unwilling to function on that basis, then don't accept the position. This was shown clearly by the Militant's soft line at the time innocent Oswald was put to death. Oswald was a Trotskyist Communist (or at least sympathizer) and was deserted by those who in time of non-crisis professed loudly to be real revolutionaries. Noting this fact helped influence me to join Spartacist as being more likely to stand up under crisis conditions.

Gaining of Madalyn Murray's printing press was a brilliant stroke for Spartacist among the working class world and we should capitalize on it, not condemn the activists who accomplished the deed.

If we members yield the point that our lives are subject to the orders of a centralism not even elected as yet, or even if elected, then if Smith's expulsion stands, we're certain to wind up at the North Pole on orders just at convention time as was done in effect to Trotsky by Stalin.

There must be something we members know nothing about which causes R.E.B. to use such harsh language and tactics on Smith at this time. Why can't you allow Smith to stay in until convention time at least. I can point up many improper actions of our leadership but it would make this letter too long so I plead for a giving up of the battle by both the expelled and the expellers until convention time. We have real urgent work ahead in completing the revolution and from all observation and experience over a 61 year period I think we're closer to success now than ever. I enclose \$10.00 as dues.

Yours for the Revolution,

Everett E. Wildor

P.S. Please print in the internal bulletin. Also please mail me copy of Trial Procedure as in Y.S.A. constitution.

E.E.W.

FINANCES - Proposal for consideration by the REB
by R. Ross and D. Rosenberg

MOTIVATION

The recent experience of Spartacist in the area of organizational financing has been a lamentable blend of inflated expectations, and disastrous under-fulfillment, and consequent disruptive interpersonal tensions and recriminations.

Yet this has not been without real and dangerous cause -- a cause which must be eradicated for the health of the organization as a whole. The entire financial structure of our organization has been both inequitable and incomprehensible to date.

The only legitimate, historical standard for minimum financial contribution by members is that initially established at "five to fifteen per cent of net income." As we shall illustrate, even this standard is lamentably imprecise; yet even it has been neither enforced nor truly enforceable. More than this, leadership at various echelons has been utterly inconsistent and incoherent in applying this standard -- often accepting the promise or actuality of much less, often, even at the REB level, casually referring to demands of "5 to 15% of gross income" (our emphasis).

Above and beyond this confusion, the early standard itself is imprecise and inequitable. What, after all, is "net income"? Income after taxes? after debt enforced by court order? after all debts? after rent? Do we compute net income simply by spending unit (individual or family) -- or per capita, giving due recognition and justice to those comrades who have families?

Do we establish merely an abstract range of figures, within which comrades are to choose at random their commitment (and be attacked therefore)? From the earliest days of Communism, with the Manifesto, we have been committed to the principle of progressive taxation, according to which those pay more, in the form of a higher proportion of their income, who can best afford it -- bearing clearly in mind that persons with lower income must devote an infinitely higher portion of that income to the bare necessities of life. And above all, we have been committed to principles of equality in taxation -- and this is a tax, of a sort: persons in substantially equivalent situations should pay equally, in a form not subject to individual whim.

The present structure has been not merely inequitable and confused; precisely because it is basically unrealistic, it is undependable. Comrades are encouraged to pledge far more than they can pay, in the hope of "making it up" some day. Procedurally, comrades requesting an adjustment in commitments once made, given changing circumstances, receive scant attention -- their dollars are too desperately needed to make up the deficit derived from budgeting on the basis of initially inflated pledges which are never "made up." Thus not merely principles and individuals, but the functioning of the organization itself are compromised.

Further, the internal political functioning of the organization is grievously compromised, as normal interpersonal tensions are exacerbated by the cross-fire of accusations of "financial irresponsibility." THIS SITUATION MUST END!

But it can only end with the initiation of a regular, established system of financing based upon the dependable and equitable principles and practices of progressive taxation. The proposed system is rather more complex than the present crystal ball of fiduciary guesswork; but it is infinitely more just,

dependable and understandable; and any fool who can manage to file an acceptable income tax return should find this a welcome relief (if the comparison seems frightening: if we want to beat a government, we've got to be at least as efficient as it is.)

PROPOSAL

I. THE MINIMUM PLEDGE expected of all members shall be determined according to a progressively graduated scale in relation to the NET INCOME PER CAPITA of each member's family (spending unit), ranging from five to fifteen per cent.

II. DEFINITIONS

NET INCOME shall be defined as that portion of the family's income retained after taxes and other legal obligations, plus any other obligations which the organization may recognize, have been deducted from gross pay.

LEGAL OBLIGATIONS shall include only those currently under enforcement by court order. The member may petition the local organization, subject to review by the REB, for recognition of OTHER OBLIGATIONS to be deducted for income computation purposes.

For assessment purposes, NET INCOME shall be divided by the number of persons dependent upon the income of the family or spending unit.

III. SCHEDULE

The minimum pledge shall be assessed according to the following schedule:

Mombors of spending units (incl. students) earning net monthly porcapita income of		shall pay to the organization no less than...	
	under \$50	5%	of that income.
	\$50-100	6%	
	\$100-150	7%	
	\$150-200	8%	
	\$200-250	9%	
	\$250-300	10%	
	\$300-350	11%	
	\$350-400	12%	
	\$400-450	13%	
	\$450-500	14%	
	\$500 and up	15%	

IV. ADDITIONAL MEMBERS: In the event that two or more members reside within a single family (or spending unit), such members shall jointly be expected to pay to the organization no less than the aforementioned minimum pledge, PLUS one-third ($1/3$) of such amount.

V. PROCEDURES

Review: All past obligations shall be subject to review by the local organization, under national supervision and direction, if such is requested within one month of the adoption by the REB of this resolution, by any comrade.

Adjustments to changing economic circumstances in the future will be carried out by the local organization upon the member's request, subject to national approval.

Collection will be through local treasurers for purposes of efficiency; locals may retain a portion of amounts received with permission of the REB. Pledges will remain a matter of individual responsibility; there will be no collective local pledges.

VI. GENERAL

With this adjustment of the pledge system, it is expected that resulting pledges will be reasonable, and that they will be MET; members failing to meet their pledge without due recourse to established procedures will be subject to disciplinary action.

This resolution shall not be construed to compromise other financial procedures, such as the 50% assessment on bequests, etc.; nor shall it in any way discourage pledges in excess of the established minimum.

CLOSING MOTIVATION

Once more, this system may seem rather complex; but the fact remains that such a system can and will function, while the present is a laughable and unworkable farce. It is just, adequate, and functional; while amounts may seem less than those presently "pledged" (but not met), this system will provide a means by which reliable income may be guaranteed. It is time that we move out of the swamp of uncertainty and inequity to the firm ground of adequate financing.

Received 24 July 1966