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THE CRISIS IN THE IS
AND
THE ROAD FORWARD

A STATEMENT ON THE STRUGGLE INSIDE THE IS,
SUBMITTED TO THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISTS
BY THE FOLLOWING MAC MEMBERS:
DAVE F., JOEL G., BILL H., MIKE S., JACK T.

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The accompanying document, entitled "NATIONAL REPORT -- Sy L.," appeared in issue #3 of the newsletter of the Revolutionary Tendency. We are reprinting it because, in our opinion, the membership of the IS is entitled to know the viewpoint of the RT leadership concerning the political debate in the IS, the image of that debate (and of its own role) which it presents to the RT as a whole, and its explicitly stated political and organizational direction.

We believe that many comrades will share our feeling of shock and outrage at the level to which the RT leadership has consciously chosen to descend. To us, the statement represents the political disintegration of a leadership which has lost the capability, and the will, not only to carry out a principled political struggle but even to pose the issues honestly to its own supporters.

Unlike Sy -- who, for reasons of his own, chooses to characterize those who disagree with the RT as "zombies" and "spade-marked cadavers" and to indulge in crude, philistine personal insults directed at his political opponents -- we will not cast aspersions on the integrity and commitment of those comrades who are following the RT leadership on what we believe to be a road to political self-destruction. We regard the viciousness which runs through Sy's statement, and with which he demands unquestioning agreement from the RT membership ("If anyone says, 'I politically agree, but think such hostility is in poor taste' ... then he doesn't politically agree"), as reflecting the political bankruptcy and a developing cult-group mentality.

Far from producing political clarification, this method of trying to cohere a tendency or group only creates a more and more poisonous atmosphere. It will destroy debate, not only in the IS, but also inside the RT. For our own self-preservation and for the sake of the future, we have no interest in resorting to it.

At the same time, we of course have no intention of allowing this document, or any others like it, to pass unanswered. As NAC members of the joint new majority leadership, we believe we are obligated to present our views of the situation in the IS openly, without hypocrisy and with full confidence in the ability of the IS membership to face squarely the crisis which is rapidly being forced to a head. For the IS to overcome this crisis we believe that the entire membership must thoroughly repudiate the views represented in the accompanying document.

I

The first aspect of Sy's document that must be underlined is the fact that it puts forward a split perspective. The intention of the RT leadership at this point is clearly to force the faction fight to the point of split as rapidly as possible.

Immediately following the NC, the RT characterized itself to its supporters as "a form transitional between" a caucus and a faction which is "preparing to formally become" an independent organization. Today that transition is obviously complete. Already, Sy boasts, the RT has laid plans for establishing a new organization ("a successful transition to independent existence").

Sy makes a purely pro forma attempt to lay responsibility for the split at the door of the IS leadership, ourselves. He states that "Moody-Finkel and Geier have already in effect sliced the IS into two organizations," as if it were our actions that precipitated the crisis. But this specious charge is not even taken seriously by the RT leadership itself, as later statements demonstrate: "We had hoped that a premature cleavage could be avoided. This was not because we believed that the issue in dispute was reconcilable. It was and is not - ever."

Within weeks after announcing its formation "as a tendency within the existing majority" (!), the RT leadership has discovered such a chasm of class differences separating it from the IS that a split is presented as being not only inevitable but desirable: "We have come to the beginning of the road."

As we pointed out at the NC, the politics of the RT have been developing at lightning speed. That process has continued, and the charges contained in Sy's "National Report" go far beyond anything previously raised. The question in the IS, says Sy, is "centrism vs. revolutionary Marxism," of "which side of the class line are you on."

For this reason they argue that the IS is "doomed to walk along the same path as its forebears and that it will one day liquidate itself into reformism outright." It is these political conclusions which make necessary the "venomous portrait" to which Sy resorts throughout the document.

What new discoveries will be made tomorrow? Who can say. Having thoroughly repudiated their politics of yesterday, they are just as capable of repudiating their politics of today. Lacking any firm theoretical foundation, or any perspective on the central question in this debate -- the labor movement -- there is no control at all over the rapidity with which their politics can develop. "Clever" jokes, humdingers, substitute for serious theory. Yet this overheated "boom" in their political development will, in all likelihood, end in the proverbial "bust."

The issue in dispute is now clear: namely, the view that the IS is a centrist, "adaptationist" group on the road to reformism; that it is a group which has crossed the class line. It is these views which make impossible a loyal, comradely collaboration. Such a characterization of the IS can only be the prelude to a split as even Sy admits, in fact asserts, in his document. To head off a split requires a principled repudiation of the politics which are leading to a split. Nothing less will do.

II

Sy launches his pompous and vituperative attack on the IS with the charge that "Shachtmanism -- despite its important although limited perceptions on Stalinism -- was doomed from its birth." We have here another of the sweeping, "profound," and contentless formulas which have been put forward by the RT leadership throughout this fight. The fact is that the RT does not, and cannot, give "Shachtmanism" any serious political or historical definition.

As we will see, the reason for this is that the RT has no position on the questions that originally brought our tendency into existence. In this faction fight, however, however important and illustrative the historical questions may be, the central question is the role of socialists in the working class movement -- especially the American labor movement -- of today.

The debate inside the IS is over the future of our tendency. The debate is over the relationship between revolutionaries and the class.

While Sy does not present any explanation of "Shachtmanite adaptationism," he is fairly clear about what he means by it. "Adaptationism," to Sy, does not mean the abandonment of the Third Camp perspective or the accommodation of Shachtman and much of the ISL to the West in the 1950's. It means, rather, the perspective of forming any kind of broad left wing or radical movement, i.e., of initiating any movement or organization broader than ourselves, either in the labor movement or elsewhere.

"Adaptationism" means any policy, anywhere or any time, which is not based solely on the struggle for our "full program;" in other words, any policy which is conditioned by the composition of the movement, its consciousness, the politics of American society in the given period, the strength and influence of the revolutionaries, etc. These concrete factors -- the "objective conditions" of which the RT is so fond of speaking -- play no role whatsoever for Sy in determining our policy.

The RT covers with ridicule the idea that revolutionary socialists must be "the best and most consistent builders" of mass movements, especially of mass-based rank and file movements in the unions. Sy refers to this as "the original Burnham fox-Trot." Sy discusses, almost in one breath, the Workers Party policy toward Reuther in the 1940's, the ISL's liquidation into the SP in the 1950's, our role in the SPU and PFP of the 1960's, and the IS orientation toward rank and file struggles today -- all this without one word of concrete analysis of what political strengths and weaknesses were reflected in the concrete policies taken toward these very different movements in very different periods. The devastating "critique" is always that "Shachtmanism" failed to raise the crystal pure full revolutionary socialist program.

For Sy, what was wrong in the Workers Party's attitude toward the labor movement in the 1940's was that it shared with a layer of radicalized militants a common program of action. Certain parts of that program were taken up (as they generally will be) by Reuther, especially in the 1946 auto strike. The WP -- incorrectly! -- believed that that struggle would open up a period of intensified mass struggle, in fact a pre-revolutionary period, and geared

their policy toward moving the militants to the left under the impact of that struggle.

The collapse of that perspective left the Workers Party staring at the prospect of the stabilization of capitalism, the restoration of prosperity and a new and stronger lease on life for the trade union bureaucracy. Under the impact of those events, they moved to the right themselves, along with those same militants. (Much of the political decomposition of the ISL originated at that point. The "bridge" of the transitional program, like any other bridge, has two-way traffic. It can lead from revolutionism to accommodation to the system, as well as the other way around. That is precisely why its use is a function of objective conditions, rather than simply being that of a sectarian medallion.)

The RT counterposes to the Workers Party policy of being "the best and most consistent builders" of mass movements a policy of being "the best and most consistent" wreckers of any movement which does not fall absolutely under the hegemony of the IS, under the hegemony of a sect. (Anyone who doubts our characterization of the RT as wreckers should take a look at the Brent D. motion on DARE, a Chicago women's liberation group, supported by the RT in Chicago.)

The method of the RT differs from that of the Workers Party mainly in that its approach -- counterpose the revolutionary program of the vanguard to the reform demands of the class -- would have made it an irrelevant sect during the leftward moving upsurge of the immediate post-war period. The RT, had it existed then, would have been unable of making contact with the militant workers, unable of appealing to those workers on the basis of their own consciousness and conditions. And it would then have led the RT to an even more rapid demoralization and liquidation afterwards.

Sy's attitude toward the labor perspectives of the IS today bears out this observation. "Today's Shachtmans take as the object of their affections the likes of Miller, Morrissey, and Dempsey -- who, in comparison with Walter Reuther, are pyrite next to gold. Comrades, if you are hell-bent and determined to sell out, do it for shiny coin, not for fool's gold!"

This remark deserves closer attention. Today, Sy is for opposing Morrissey in order to support (and thereby expose as a "centrist") the Spartacist League candidate Herson in the NEU. In the UAW, he is still for critical support to Miller -- since the Spartacist League has no candidate there, evidently. In the New York CMA elections, he evidently has no policy or sees no need for one. To Sy, however, these types are "fool's gold" next to the "shiny coin" of Walter Reuther!

What does Sy think was so "shiny" about Reuther? What makes Reuther -- the figure who captured the leftward moving sentiment of the militants and channelled it into a bureaucratic pro-capitalist, pro-imperialist machine -- a "shiny" figure next to Miller, Morrissey or Dempsey? Sy actually thinks Reuther was "shiny" by comparison because of . . . his program! -- because Reuther's paper program, the program used to capture and destroy the militant stratum in the UAW was more advanced than the minimal and often backward

programs of today's left bureaucrats or even rank and file oppositionists!

It is only to Sy that Reuther appears as a "shiny" figure. To us, neither Reuther nor the Millers, Morrisseys and Dempseys hold any attraction. Our attitude toward the latter is a political one: it is they who, vacillatingly and half-heartedly, give expression to existing dissent and help lay the basis for cohering a new militant opposition in the unions. Any serious examination of the left wing press in this country will show that the IS, without pseudo-revolutionary phrasemongering, has raised sharper and more principled differences with every one of the opposition leaders than has any other tendency, without exception.

While Sy was listint these oppositionists to whom we give critical support today, precisely because of the relationship they have to the potentially revolutionary rank and file oppositionists, he should have included the oppositionists within the UAW, such as (for example) Pete Kelly and Jordan Sims. They too, no doubt, "are pyrite next to gold" in comparison to the "shiny" opportunist Walter Reuther.

The true measure of the disorientation of the RW leadership is that it regards the IS of today as being to the right of the "Shachtmanite" Workers Party -- because today's rank and file in the unions is "programmatically" on a lower level than the bureaucracy of yesteryear.

That is why Sy is so interested in debating the history of the PFP, SPU, etc.: namely, his violent hostility toward the perspective of helping to build broad rank and file opposition movements in the unions today. His entire "method" of attacking "Shachtmanism" essentially reduces to this. The fact that such a movement will be "programmatically" on a lower level, not only of the IS but of ... the Walter Reuther of 1946, gives him a neat handle by which to score debaters' points and crack cheap jokes. That's about all.

We also have it on Sy's authority that the RW has broken from the discredited "Shachtmanite" view that the social revolution in Europe following World War II, in nations under the heel of fascist and Stalinist occupation, would be opened up through mass struggles for democracy and national freedom independent of all the imperialist powers. No doubt the correct policy was to counterpose to such struggles the immediate formation of soviets -- by a working class whose political independence and economic organizations had been destroyed -- as advocated by the SWP of 1943-44. Would such a policy, advanced by revolutionists in sympathy with us, have advanced the struggle by providing the working class with any concrete guidance or leadership? Perhaps it would have destroyed reformist illusions among the workers regarding the importance of democracy? Perhaps it would have smashed the so-called "illusion" -- actually one of the most important lessons of Marxism and of the twentieth century -- that the survival of soviets depends precisely upon the struggle for the fullest and broadest democracy?

Why, incidentally, does Sy continue to use the hopelessly confused and analytically meaningless label "bourgeois-democratic" in connection with the struggle for national freedom and democracy in Europe in the World War II period, just as he applies it to the Black struggle in the US today? As if it

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NAC Hierarchy

were a question of a bourgeois revolution, either in Europe or in the US!

Again, we know that Sy renounces the "Shachtmanism" of those who, in the early 1960's, led the struggle against Shachtman's own final capitulation -- not only to the Democratic Party, but to US imperialist foreign policy as well. Sy does not mention this factor, but we will discuss it briefly.

Sy's statement mentions the Labor Party Tendency, but omits the struggle against Shachtman's pro-imperialist politics that took place inside the YPSL. Perhaps this is because the Labor Party Tendency itself split over foreign policy questions. The right wing of the Tendency, which Sy led, renounced Shachtman's open support of the Bay of Pigs invasion, but badly accommodated to the "left" (State Department Socialist) wing of the invasion. Other comrades -- today denounced as centrists and opportunists -- opposed this attitude (which was Sy's at the time) and unequivocally opposed the invasion as thoroughly imperialist. In the India-China war of 1963, when a position of no support and revolutionary opposition toward both sides was needed, Sy supported the defense of "democratic India" against Chinese Stalinist expansion -- swallowing the carefully fabricated lies of Western imperialism that it was "Chinese aggression" which had precipitated the conflict. It was these questions -- fundamentally, the question of uncompromising opposition to capitalist imperialism -- that divided the YPSL Left which, from Sy's new point of view, was "adaptationist" because ... it failed to adopt a transitional program for the labor party.

This discussion is not aimed at discrediting Sy, exposing him as a liquidationist or any of the vile references ("humbug" is the mildest) he enjoys hurling at us. There is, however, one political point. Sy, while willing to renounce the entire history of this tendency as one of capitulation and betrayal, is evidently unwilling to analyze his own mistakes within the context of that tradition. In many cases, especially in the period when Shachtman was abandoning the Third Camp world view and perspective and leading his followers into the camp of Western imperialism, Sy's mistakes were those of Stalinophobia -- the subordination of all other political questions to the fear of Stalinism.

These mistakes, departures from the Third Camp viewpoint, were made in the context of a disintegrating movement influenced heavily both by Shachtman and by the same objective factors -- twenty years of defeat and counter-revolution -- which had destroyed Shachtman's own revolutionary perspective. (It is easy to renounce responsibility for the events of the 1950's, but impossible to explain them away!)

Finally, however, what Sy cannot forgive the "latter day Shachtmanites" of the YPSL is that they built a broad peace movement organization which included not only revolutionary socialists but also liberals, pacifists with illusions in the UN, and adherents of other unsavory ideologies. We do not know, precisely, what attitude Sy would advocate toward the peace movement of the early 1960's. When we find out, we will be prepared to comment on this chapter of history as well.

The RT leaders believe they are the first Trotskyist group to exist for decades. But in fact they have abandoned Trotskyism for sectarianism. The Trotskyism of Minneapolis, of the Workers Party's rank and file caucuses fight

against the no-strike pledge -- these activities would be characterized by the new RT politics as sheer adaptationism, the formation of broad rank and file groups with reformist workers, on a program quite short of the revolutionary one.

These brand-new "Trotskyists" are very fond of quoting Trotsky. But their quotes are very selective. We wonder what they would say about the following:

"From the worker desirous of joining the ranks of the Communists, the party has a right to demand: you must accept our program and obey our regulations and authority of our electoral institutions. But it is absurd and criminal to present the same a priori demand, or even a part of it, to the working masses of workers' organizations when the matter of joint action for the sake of definite aims of struggle is broached. Thereby the very foundations of the party are undermined; for the party can fulfill its task only by maintaining correct relations with the class. Instead of issuing such a one sided ultimatum, which irritates and insults the workers, the party should submit a definite program for joint action. That is the surest way of achieving leadership in reality."

Or -- "We must not let ourselves be guided by doctrinaire abstractions but by the state of consciousness of the masses and the way they react to various partial successes. Simply counterposing the slogan of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' or 'workers and peasants republic' to the present regime is entirely inadequate because these slogans do not move the masses."

Or -- "Every day, every hour, to answer clearly to ourselves what our next practical step must be, tirelessly to prepare this step and on the basis of living experience to explain to the workers the principled difference of Bolshevism from all other parties and currents."

Although our members are new and inexperienced in the labor movement, they are already making a contribution, under difficult objective conditions of very minimal working class motion, towards the development of a militant working class movement of the future. In auto factories, telephone, Teamsters, teachers, and elsewhere our comrades have built rank and file oppositions and newspapers. They are winning the respect of their fellow workers, including the older militants, and beginning to become recognized shop-floor leaders, and elected stewards and officers of their unions. They have won to our banner a small but significant group of workers.

The revolutionary rhetoric of the RT is nothing more than a cover for their own isolation and conservatism. They fear the real live struggles of the workers and look for every excuse to remain isolated from them. They pose to the IS the task of vying for revolutionary leadership of the class - propagandistically - rather than in the real struggles the working class wages every day.

Given the weak social composition, and the destructive factional situation which has dragged on in the IS, the progress we have made to moving to become a working class organization is not to be dismissed, particularly if this fight leads to reinvigorated efforts to become a revolutionary proletarian organization. It is through the hard, systematic work in the labor movement, through

taking part in the existing struggle, that we will build the movement and revolutionary party of the future.

If the expected rank and file upsurge did not come as quickly as we expected, it is no reason for impressionistically succumbing to momentary moods of defeatism, and shopping in the historical trashbag for well worn -- that is, discredited -- perspectives, for succumbing to the sectarianism which has now swept through the petty bourgeois radical milieu, but which is an obstacle to ever developing a revolutionary workers' party -- no matter how the fool's gold of momentary growth of the Labor Committee, Sparts, and RU may impress some people.

III

When we rejected the proposal of the newly hatched RT that the leadership of the organization be handed over to it by the last NC -- presumably so that the historical bankruptcy and centrism of the IS as a Third Camp socialist tendency could be openly proclaimed in our press without undue delay -- we were accused of "cooking up" a defense of the principles of the Third Camp as a false rationalization for a "rotten bloc". It is now clear that the RT leadership did not take itself seriously in raising this charge, either.

It is the RT's inability to come to grips with the issues that gave rise to "Shachtmanism" that makes it impossible for them to actually define what they mean by it. Sy's discussion is reduced to a series of anecdotes which are supposed to expose the hideous crimes that our tendency allegedly committed.

The reason for this is that the RT comrades have no point of view on the fundamental question -- the "Russian question" and the issues associated with it -- that gave rise to the opposition inside the SMP, led by Shachtman, and to the split in the Trotskyist movement in 1940. For Sy, was the theory of bureaucratic collectivism developed by our tendency (and our rejection of defense of the imperialist Stalinist state) fundamentally correct? Incorrect? A step forward for the Marxist movement? A capitulation to the petit bourgeoisie? Evidently none of these, according to Sy. Our politics are described, instead, as "important although limited perceptions." Unfortunately, Sy will not tell us what are either their "importance" or their "limitations":

Having no position on the Russian question -- except that they are convinced both sides were wrong -- most of the RT leadership regards the 1939 split as being a tragic "mistake" which it is their historical mission to reconcile somehow or another. This (rather than some peculiar megalomania) helps to explain why many RT comrades regard themselves as "the first real Trotskyists" since 1939!

The comrades of the RT have no position on Stalinism. It is incredible, but it is a fact.

They can, for a time, hide their nakedness and maintain their revolutionary anti-Stalinist credentials by standing on sections of the body of literature produced on Stalinism by Trotsky before 1939 and on the major political

positions which they retain from their own discredited "Shachtmanite" past -- so long, that is, as they also hide from themselves the contradictions in Trotsky's analysis and its eventual collapse. Most RT leaders, for the moment, will "stand" on the assertion that Russia is one or another form of class society.

But this simple article of faith, put forward in place of a theory, cannot explain whether the Stalinist countries are capitalist (bourgeois), anti-capitalist or anything else. It is compatible (depending on the political pressures of the moment) with any and all conclusions -- ranging from defense of "progressive nationalized property," a la the Orthodox Trotskyists, to the defense of capitalist imperialism against "Stalinist barbarism," the position developed by Shachtman in his eventual abandonment of the Third Camp view and perspective.

The leaders of the RT, whose desperate eagerness to dissociate themselves from the ISC/IS has led them to their "break" with everything historically "tainted" with the dread disease of "Shachtmanism," now find themselves staring into a theoretical void. Underneath the bravado, the crude jokes, and the "higher algebra" on which RT politics are based, lies the most profound contempt not only for history but for Marxist theory as well. This so-called Revolutionary Tendency cannot even answer the standard charge of the "Orthodox Trotskyists": that it was Shachtman's rejection of defensism and his analysis of Stalinism which led to his "adaptationism." The first serious encounter with the views of "Orthodox Trotskyism" -- i.e., Pabloism -- on the Russian question is likely to send these agnostic sectarians splintering in all directions.

Hopefully, this confrontation will help to show many of the comrades of the RT that it was only the politics of our tendency -- the politics of revolutionary third camp socialism -- which were not adaptationist, which continued to maintain that there could be no socialism, and no workers' state, without a workers' revolution and a revolutionary party.

We did not adapt to any ruling class, or ruling class ideologies, not because we were more virtuous than other revolutionaries, but because our theory better armed us to face the world. It is this theory which the RT now wishes to malign and discredit. It was our theory on these questions which allowed us to maintain the revolutionary communist tradition -- the Trotskyist tradition -- while the sects who ritualistically mumbled about the need for a revolutionary party as a substitute for a revolutionary policy trailed after the dozen "dictatorships of the proletariat" which appeared without a revolutionary proletarian party or a proletarian revolution.

It is our theory of socialism from below, today mocked by the RT, which kept us from adapting to other classes, because we understood the key role of working class consciousness for socialism and the socialist revolution. But this the RT leaders joke about in their new found "seriousness", because for them working class consciousness plays little or no role in the program and fight for the revolutionary party.

IV

To the ranks of the RT we ask -- you joined the IS, do you still hold its politics? Do you wish to go forward with us to help construct a revolutionary proletarian party -- or do you believe we have gone over to the class enemy? Do you want instead the new perspective of regroupment with other, unspecified, Trotskyist sects -- whom your leadership now thinks are closer to them than we are? If so, why not name these groups and let us debate their politics, whether they are more or less adaptationist than we, presumably, are?

We believe that the RT is headed on a course of destruction. Without a firm theoretical foundation, with its rapidly shifting politics, it can only produce new crises and fragmentations in the future.

With all of its problems the IS has a theory which arms it for the revolutionary future. The crisis of capitalism due to the permanent arms economy and its contradictions; the economic and political crisis of bureaucratic collectivism; the three-cornered struggle for the world, the role of consciousness -- and therefore of a revolutionary vanguard party -- the relationship of revolutionary socialism to revolutionary democracy; these theoretical conquests which the RT leadership is now systematically repudiating are what give the IS its historical future, what makes it a viable tendency.

Theory and practice are a unity. The events since 1968, of France, Czechoslovakia, Italy, Poland -- and the re-emerging struggles of the American working class -- represent the future of the Third Camp perspective.

It is our perspectives, our theory, which represent the road to proletarian revolution. The RT's is only a dead end, leading to sectarian stagnation, no more viable today than it ever has been in the past.

There are some comrades within the IS who do not adhere to a Third Camp world view in every respect, including some who have been recruited to us from a background in the Trotskyist movement. We believe that we can prove to these comrades, whose contributions we value, that it is our perspectives for the IS which begin to map out a road leading to the goal they desire as deeply as we do. In defending the Third Camp views which we hold, and which we believe to represent the consistent application of the principles of Marxism in this epoch, we have no more aspirations to ideological monolithicism than we had in the past. We continue to hold to the motion on "recruitment of orthodox Trotskyists" passed by the NAC and IC, which defends the Third Camp character of the IS as a political tendency but puts forward the perspective of common organization with comrades with whom we share agreement on building the revolutionary movement in the US, and a commitment to revolutionary democratic socialism from below.

This faction fight has made it much more difficult for us to carry out the perspective of winning to our ranks the best of the forces repelled from the Byzantine sectarianism which has accompanied degeneration of the Trotskyist movement. Indeed, the greatest tragedy is that so much of the RT's politics will lead it -- empirically and impressionistically -- toward the same graveyard. We, however, have not abandoned this recruitment perspective as a

task for the future.

More than that, it is our perspectives for today, for our involvement in the labor movement, which will enable us to build a revolutionary party in this country. It is our non-sectarian and non-ultamatic approach towards the labor movement which enables us to help build, and play a leading role, in the broad rank and file oppositions in the trade unions.

It is only through the development of the class struggle, through the development of broad opposition movements and the political independence of the working class, that the basis of a revolutionary party can be built. Those who cannot provide leadership for the struggles of today around all the minimal and partial demands which concern the working class cannot hope to provide leadership for it tomorrow. Those who abstain from building broad rank and file organizations today, or worse still, actively try to wreck them, only discredit themselves. Those who believe that the road to a revolutionary party is through the regroupment of various sects, rather than through the development of the class struggle, are only fooling themselves.

The RT has attacked our whole theory, and we will defend it. But the substance of the differences that are emerging in the IS are not over Trotskyism, but over its abandonment; not over the Russian question, but the American question. It is the IS which will continue the struggle of the early American Trotskyists, to defend the politics of the October Revolution. It is the IS which has the hope for developing an American cadre of worker-Bolsheviks, capable of leading new Minneapolis and Toledo -- struggles which are already denigrated by the RT.

This fight inside the IS must have a progressive outcome. It can do this if, first, it leads to political clarification, to the development of a cohesive cadre firmly armed with revolutionary Marxist theory; second, if it helps to overcome our isolation from the working class, to rooting us in the on-going class struggle, to bringing us out of the petty bourgeois radical milieu with its political instability; lastly, if it leads to our re-dedicating ourselves to fighting for a revolutionary combat organization which can intervene in the class struggle, that requires democratic centralism, unity in action based on shared perspectives.

We therefore appeal to all members of the IS to join with us in this fight.

NATIONAL REPORT -- Sy L.

We have come to the beginning of the road.

Our tour (Ron, Sy, Don), the reports we receive, our eyes and ears tell us that our membership -- the membership of the RT -- in the IS is about to be terminated. Only the date on which the IS's new leadership will force us out is still unknown to us. Our best guess is that the act (or acts) of organizational vivisection will occur sometime in the fall.

This, however, will be merely a post-operative performance; the actual political surgery has already been concluded. Moody-Finkel and Geier have already in effect sliced the IS into two organizations. Much of their rank and file throughout the country openly anticipates the final strokes of the knife.

The operation, however, will be unique. That which is cut away will live. That from which it is cut will be a zombie -- the living dead.

We mean this seriously.

Shachtmanism -- despite its important although limited perceptions on Stalinism -- was doomed from its birth. The overwhelming majority of its leadership and membership first adapted and finally capitulated to reformism. They became not the parlor-pinks predicted by Trotsky but the thorough-going social-imperialists who beat the drums for the Viet-Nam war in unison with George Meany.

We are not fortune tellers and cannot predict the precise fate of the present IS leadership tendency. We can see, however, that it is doomed to walk along the same path as its forebears and that it will one day liquidate itself into reformism outright.

The Shachtmanites of the World War II period proclaimed that a bourgeois-democratic program must form the basis for socialists' work in Europe during the next stage. The proletarian stage would follow only thereafter. In the late '40s and the '50s, Reutherite, social-democratic programs were the key for the Shachtmanites; later there would be time for the real, honest-to-goodness socialist program.

In 1958 the Shachtmanites entered the Socialist Party in order, they declared, to maintain an "opening to the right." It was necessary, they said, to sponsor a broad minimal program. Bye and bye, the Marxist program and the role of revolutionaries would return to the agenda. In the meantime, the SP was to be a "broad, all-inclusive party."

There is no such thing. A party is either a reformist party, a centrist party, or a revolutionary party. (Leaving out the even more right-wing alternatives, of course.) The Shachtmanites' "broad" program for the SP reflected the program's reformist character. Those who tried to substitute themselves for the (largely absent) frank reformists in defending and championing the reformist program -- these substitutionists became reformists themselves and organizationally and politically self-destructed ... liquidated. To safeguard the "broad" character of the SP's projected program, the ISLers (or ex-ISLers) would have to become (in the words of one participant), the "policeman of the Left." They

would have to hush up and/or fight off attempts by other revolutionaries to undermine the SP's "all-inclusive" political program. This was a brief role; the players soon became political-police agents of the Right. In the first period in the SP, the semblance of radicalism was maintained by the Shachtmanites in order to delude the SP's "left" wing; even the semblance was quickly discarded, however, as they stampeded into the ranks of the Democratic Party. The explanation? Easy: since the masses did not move leftward with sufficient rapidity, it was necessary to step in "where the masses are at" ... reflecting their current level of consciousness ... in order to "galvanize" them into motion. Transform the Democratic Party into a reformist labor party! The Transformers (!) were transformed, not the Democratic Party.

A tiny handful of former Shachtmanites waged a struggle, mainly in the YPSL (youth section of the SP). They formed the Labor Party Caucus to fight the Shachtman mainstream over the issue of supporting the Democratic Party. Entry into the Democratic Party is the rough-hewn marker, on the American scene, which stands between centrism and reformism. And here the line was drawn by the Labor Party Caucus.

Unfortunately, however, the young dissidents not only stood by the Shachtmanites' general method -- adaptationism -- but also reaffirmed the same "next step" ... a reformist labor party and a reformist program. And the revolutionary party and the socialist program? Somewhere, over the rainbow

Let's pass quickly for the moment over the signal, outstanding achievement of the YPSL left -- the Student Peace Union (SPU). This YPSL-led phenomenon was maintained on a "broad", radic-lib program with the YPSLs prostrating themselves cheerfully before such delights as UN-ism, pacifism, peace-corps-ism, etc., ad nauseum.

The collapse of the YPSL and the SPU led eventually to the formation of the ISC-IS by the remnants which survived.

One-half of the IS's new National Secretary glowingly points out the crown jewel of the ISC's interventions: the Peace and Freedom Party (PFP). Here, once again, the Shachtmanite method was tested in practice. Broad radical program ... maintain the opening to the right police the left step in and give the radic-lib leadership which the radic-libs themselves will not provide The "next step", though, was now not even a reformist labor party but a middle-class "galvanizing" or "catalyzing" party. The next next step was the reformist labor party. Once again, the socialist program was lost on the Russian steppes and in books and lounge-chair debates about 1917. Build the next all-inclusive, left-wing party, neither reformist nor revolutionary nor liberal nor but all of them rolled into one bundled up in the ageing "minimal radical program".

* * * * *

A precocious young lad, seeking to fool his biology professor, assembled an insect with the eyes of a fly, the wings of a wasp, the torso of a spider, and the limbs of a locust.

He, hiding a self-congratulatory smirk, presented the specimen to the educator and said, "Sir, I just found this bug in the woods. It is obviously unusual, possibly unique. Do you know what it is?"

"Young sir," queried the teacher, "did it hum when you found it?"

"Why ... yes, sir ... I guess it did."
"Then it's a humbug."

Or, in the crisper style of Hal Draper:

"The only possible cement for the Peace and Freedom coalition lies in the two characteristics which it actually did develop, as we have already stressed: the minimum nature of its radical program and the orientation toward militant issue-oriented action which can unite people in movement."

In the same essay, Draper adds:

"In concept, Peace and Freedom is an all-inclusive (emphasis in original) radical party, aspiring to be inclusive of a wide-ranging assortment of radicals with the most disparate and clashing ideologies, including the anti-ideological ideology. This inclusiveness is a good trick if you can get away with it. But how can the trick be pulled off?" (Maybe by humming real loud?)

Draper also precociously points out, "It is difficult to pigeon-hole it ("Oh, professor, I found this unique pigeon-hole in the woods ...") with a label because it simply does not comfortably conform to pre-existing labels for anticipated third-party movements."

The only label which PFP "comfortably conformed to", in fact, was ... Shachtmanism. The difference between Shachtman and the Latter Day Shachtmanites was that the latter (!) recoiled from the consequences of the master's method and therefore unwound the reel a bit and started all over again -- playing, however, the self-same reel. The YPSL-ISC-IS replay was saved from total liquidationism only by the collapse of the PFP. When Shachtman set out on his own "next step" ("The longest journey begins with the next step," sayeth someone or other), Shachtman was careful to set his foot down on good, solid waste(-land). But when the ISC took its "next step" it was careless and plunged into a liquid waste-stream. It had no choice; dripping wet, it had to climb back out. Had the lay of the land been different, the ISC would then and there have melted into the ranks of the radic-libs exactly as the original Shachtmanites did into the lib-libs.

* * * * *

And now, invigorated by the memory of these past successes of the method of Shachtmanism -- here we go again! And this time the new (old, very old) IS majority will do its act (the snappy "one-step" ... or maybe the original Burnham fox-Trot) in the labor movement!

The new-old leadership bloc is composed of the Transformation and Modesty caucuses. These siamese twins share the body of Shachtmanism but are fraternal (sororal) rather than identical siblings. With varying verbiage and slight differences they pose the task of the IS identically in essence: to galvanize (catalyze, mobilize, organize) the working class into a pre-destined "next step" -- an amorphous, barely centrist, "left wing" movement, or stage.

This is variously called a rank-and-file stage, a shop-floor-struggle-stage,

a from-the-bottom-up-type-unionism stage. It's an all-inclusive movement, it'll have radicals, reformists, revolutionaries, nationalists, feminists, etc., with a broad, broad, non-sectarian, and yet-again-broad program. It's neither reformist nor revolutionary but it's gonna be a real hum ... dinger!

Will the labor party we call for as part of this next step (or, next, next step) be described in our calls as "general, broad, non-sectarian, non-revolutionary, non-reformist, you-name-it" labor party? Or would it then be too obvious an evasion, requiring that we call for it on a straight-out reformist basis?

(Perhaps it will be the Transformation/Modesty version of an algebraic demand? That is, the masses fill it with any content they want -- and T/M call for it filled with whatever content that the masses want. Leadership marches on.)

And so the Shachtman Reel is coming full circle. Contrary to Trotsky's prediction -- that the Shachtmanites would capitulate to the middle-class intellectuals -- only a small proportion did so. As we have pointed out above, the final capitulation was to George Meany.

But the road to Meany ran through many earlier way-stations, notably the Walter Reuther period. The first substantial capitulation in the labor movement was the move from critical support of Reuther to support of Reuther with some criticisms. The original Shachtmanites were much, much more serious perceptually and analytically than are the Latter Day Shachtmanites. The first generation realized that a "transitional stage" had a "transitional leadership" (in today's parlance -- ugh!). In the 1950s, therefore, they styled themselves as left Reutherites. The Latter-Day Shachtmanites take as their model the Shachtmanites of the 1950s, not even of 1940! Moody and Geier start off shouting support-with-criticisms -- thus setting out from a political stage which the Shachtmanites reached only once they were well into their degeneration-capitulation. Even more embarrassing, today's Shachtmans take as the object of their affections the likes of Miller, Morrissey, and Dempsey -- who, in comparison with Walter Reuther, are pyrite next to gold. Comrades, if you are hell-bent and determined to sell out, do it for shiny coin, not for fool's gold!

A precocious old lad seeking to fool his mythology professor put together a god consisting of two faces of Janus (both facing backward), one Cyclopean eye (blinded), one crippled leg from Vulcan (capable only of one hop-step at a time).

He, hiding a self-congratulatory smirk, presented the specimen to the educator and said, "Sir, I just found this god on Mount Olympus. It's obviously unusual, possibly unique. Do you know what it is?"

"Old sir," queried the teacher, "did it mumble 'non-sectarian, non-sectarian, non-sectarian' when you found it?"

"Why ... yes, sir ... I guess it did."

The professor then replied, "Then it's not quite unique ... but it is a god. It's the Second Coming!"

II

If anyone believes that the above is merely good-natured lampooning - don't be deceived. It is a quite accurate (and meant to be quite venomous) portrait. If anyone says, "I politically agree, but think such hostility is in poor taste" ... then he doesn't agree. The issue at stake in the IS is baldly, simply, accurately this -- which side of the class line are you on? The old polemics that IS'ers enjoy (as long as they are safely in the past) were frequently inspired by the concept that the class struggle is waged not just in the "arenas" but within the vanguard stratum itself. And the venom of the polemics was conditioned by all the necessary and desirable emotion which that conviction brought. But of course, the majority IS, brought up in the tradition that all that stuff is correct in the past but "sectarian" in the present, has no such conception. We do.

We pose the question in the IS as centrism vs. revolutionary Marxism. Centrism in a nutshell is revolutionary phraseology (frequently "sincere") coupled with reformist practice. Centrism can move in one of two directions (affected by its milieu), being an unstable phenomenon: overt support of class society (reformism) or revolutionary Marxism.

What was a fluid situation in the IS, rendered somewhat hopeful by the relative upsurge of workers and objective changes - is no longer fluid. The T/M leadership has crystallized and moved to the right. Its badly miseducated rank and file has done so as well, with a vengeance. The RT has polarized and crystallized as a revolutionary tendency increasingly meshing its theory and practice and acting in an increasingly disciplined fashion.

We had hoped that a premature cleavage could be avoided. This was not because we believed the issue in dispute was reconcilable. It was and is not - ever. But we felt that we had the political dynamic and the only thought-out method and analysis. We felt and knew that the level and capability of both our leadership and our ranks was higher than those of our opponents. We were certain that we were correct in our understanding of Marxism and above all - how to use it creatively. These things are still there - however, the situation has changed.

The unity of the new leadership grouping has rendered their bloc much more solid. Brian M. came, saw, was conquered. The new leadership will quibble with each other, perhaps even forever - essentially even any thunder will not produce light. Before then even know the content of their joint agreement on the "tradition," we have it on reliable authority that Joel Geier will be National Secretary and Brian Mackenzie Industrial Director after the convention. The deal is made, the pie is cut, the political filler will follow. Lots of crust, little else.

The force-out situation is in their hands. We cannot stop them from forcing us out. Our direct observation on the tour and other reports demonstrate that there is not basis for even a "sympathy" bloc to prevent our expulsion, at any time picked by the T/M combo.

This is unfortunate, because the advantage which a factional struggle offers educationally is far from exhausted. All salient issues are not clarified. For then it doesn't mean anything, for us it does. Our cadre will not have its agreement as internalized as a longer struggle might have permitted.

It is also unfortunate in that any split is premature unless the most important questions are tested in the living struggle. Praxis is the real proof of a conception.

Bound up with all of these factors was our hope - ever smaller, it is true - that we could win the IS ranks to a common revolutionary socialist program, as we have fought for. We hoped against hope that this would occur. It has not.

We are also mindful of the years of labor we put in to build the IS. We were always organizational loyalists; we have little respect for people who do not take their organization seriously.

The role of the vanguard even in partial or embryonic stages of development is critical to the human race. There can be no socialist revolution, nor socialism, without a revolutionary party. There can be no revolutionary party without tested, knowledgeable, trained, dedicated, and cohesive cadre willing even to sacrifice their lives if necessary. This is not built in a day. We must begin now.

Far from being false heroics this is merely a statement of what should be obvious to anybody who calls himself or herself a revolutionist, a Trotskyist. For far too long, the IS has encouraged a subtle, corroding, miserable cynicism and self-deprecation under the mask of reasonableness and sophistication. The idiotic spectacle of Workers' Power printing stupid caricatures of Marx - ourselves - while we slobberingly lick every other ass is only a most obvious example.

The ultimate, however, is the notion of a "serious" caucus in the IS saying in its initial statement that it invites suggestions for a name - that it pridefully distinguishes itself from the other groups which take on pretentious names - presumably the Revolutionary Tendency, etc. The Mackenzie "Modesty" Caucus reveals its own character and self-expectation.

Revolution is the most arrogant act of history. The fundamental ideas which a group puts forward are in its opinion the ideas upon which the revolution should be made; if not, why put them forward? One believes someday the core of one's ideas will be the leadership ideas. Do these people have the audacity to ask human beings to risk sacrificing their lives for ideas which they deprecate, which they do not regard as serious? Humility is a foul characteristic for leadership. They are fitting inheritors of the "tradition" of "Big Red," "The Band," etc., ad nauseum.

We have tried to make the IS into an instrument which could successfully intervene as a cohesive group in the class struggle. It seems that we have failed.

We are proud, however, that we have in our tendency a huge proportion of the read cadre of the IS. We are gratified that virtually our entire membership - now about 80 members - consists of activists, and not chairwarmers such as make up so much of the rest of the IS. At the convention we will represent no cemetery votes like the spade-marked cadavers that the Berkeley branch (for example) will dig up for votes.

We are angry over the force-out/expulsion attitude on the part of the Shachtmanites we met on our tour of the branches. The knowing grins we met in Berkeley when we indicated we were here in the IS to stay, the conversations with individual supporters of the TC making clear the imminence of expulsion, the dividing out of RT comrades from the joint telephone fraction in the Bay Area, etc. The conspicuous non-attendance at a public forum in San Francisco by East Bay TC'ers ... where Don Cane, National Black-Brown Coordinator and RT leader, spoke. The fact that neither Berkeley nor Seattle branches - after adequate advance notice - could manage a public forum in their locales for Don added to the innumerable other maneuverings make the situation so clear that only the naive could ignore the reality; a fait accompli. (Don didn't even bother to go to Seattle after that.)

Hardly being naive, we have made our plans for a successful transition to independent existence when we are ejected.

III

Ron T. and myself, travelling for the RT, and Don Cane, coordinating minority work, covered Austin-San Antonio, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Berkeley. In Texas we recruited 4 of 7 IS comrades to the RT; the TC possibly has one student and the other two comrades are between us and the Leninist Tendency.

In Los Angeles we recruited heavily and our group numbers 13, plus a periphery. In our orbit is a small group, hostile to the T/M leadership bloc but with so far not highly articulated differences with us. In San Francisco we have three comrades active in union work who have agreed to move to L. for consolidation purposes after the convention.

Although as can be imagined we spent time ironing out differences, we were happily surprised at the coherence and growing discipline of our cadre. In the Bay Area the TC predominates relying on their almost total control - with Parker - of the East Bay. They are a minority in the San Francisco branch. The Leninist Tendency has 5 members in San Francisco.

We debated Parker on PFP and Program in L. and Berkeley respectively. We debated the LT in L. and San Francisco on general lines. Box score: 3 victories, one tie. The arguments and counterarguments with the LT will be forthcoming in a newsletter quickly following this one as comrades Doug and Judith are touring the country. Our estimate of them is that they have virtually the politics of the Spartacists. We rejected their overtures which in effect proposed a fusion, and do not trust their protestations of closeness

at all. Their debating method is the pot-shot technique of the Spartacists - who did what when, etc. While they claim to represent Trotskyism (complete with roars and chestbeating) and that our program is in the process of coming into agreement with them - they have failed to back up their claim to such a mantle with any evidence that they understand the methodology of Trotskyism at all. While protesting that they want us all, they work hard at driving wedges. What method they have is a series of prescriptions designed to wall them in as protection against their own opportunism.

The Parker debates revealed little new about program but were unbelievable in terms of the PFP where the critical evaluation said in effect that we should have tried harder to recruit blacks. Evaluations were virtually all at that level. Parker also referred to the PFP as a "declassé movement" not a "middle class movement." PFP'ers were "interested in fighting oppression and injustice" - how could we describe it as middle class? Parker in the course of his remarks quoted an ISC resolution to the Richmond, Calif., PFP convention beginning, "We as a middle class movement"

Tapes in one state or another were made of these debates and may be available in the near future.

Ron, Don and myself got sick of hearing horror stories which substituted for politics. Did you hear about what the RT comrade did in the Birds Nest Gatherers Union in East Yuckle? But we collected enough wood from the wedges people attempted to drive between RT'ers to sell at a nice profit. "Oh, you're all right, but the RT'ers in Turkey Buzzard are stone sectarians"

Comrade Flinkel immediately followed us to LA. Comrades there report that his task was obviously to create a line of total hostility between the tendencies which would make collaboration, to any extent, intolerable. His attacks on personalities were so blatant that even members of his own bloc admonished him. The idea of normally mild-mannered Clark Kent, Star Editor of Workers' Power, transforming himself into Supershrew merely indicates the orchestration of the "split" atmosphere.

IV

The tasks before us are enormous. We approach them with confidence. The task of building toward a revolutionary party and the reconstruction of a Trotskyist International is huge, but we are in a unique position to make a sizeable contribution. All varieties of centrists, Pabloites, and the like usurp the banner of revolutionary socialism. In the United States, opportunism and sectarianism run rampant under the guise of Trotskyism. The rise of the class struggle will accelerate centrifugal forces. Until now only centrifugal dynamics have operated, creating a myriad of groups. Winnowing the revolutionaries from the chaff through a principled regroupment strategy at an opportune time will feature our efforts. This can only be done through the strength of our ideas and our actual work in the class as we reach out to the advanced layers.

We are fully aware of the fact that we have both the deepest understanding of the Marxist tools and the most potential for creative politics in the movement today. The horrible fact that not one serious theoretical journal exists among all the American "Trotskyist" groups is a telling comment upon the sterility we are challenging.

We are carefully and painstakingly examining every bit of the history of Trotskyism - its degeneration in the mirror forms of Pabloism and Shachtmanism. This is testimony to the fact that we intend to learn everything possible from the errors of the past. The fact that we have such a bright future is unfortunately not attributable to much that was valuable in the IS. Except ... in the sense that the great glories of the Bolshevik Revolution are attributable to the miseries of Tsarism.

When we are forced to leave, it will be more in anger than in sorrow.