

Genesis of Pabloism

The SWP and the Fourth International, 1946-54

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The American Socialist Workers Party and the European Pabloists travelled at different rates along different paths to revisionism, to converge in uneasy alliance in the early 1960's in an unprincipled "reunification," which has now broken down as the American SWP has completed the transition from Pabloist centrism to outright reformism. The "United Secretariat" which issued out of the 1963 "reunification" teeters on the edge of an open split; the "anti-revisionist" "International Committee" fractured last year. The collapse of the various competing pretenders to the mantle of the Fourth International provides a crucial opportunity for the reemergence of an authentic Trotskyist international tendency. Key to the task of reconstructing the Fourth International through a process of splits and fusions is an understanding of the characteristics and causes of Pabloist revisionism and the flawed response of the anti-Pabloists who fought, too little and too late, on national terrain while in practice abandoning the world movement.

World War II: U.S. and France

Before the onset of the war, Trotsky and the Fourth International had believed that decaying capitalism and the rise of fascism removed the possibility, for reformism and therefore for bourgeois-democratic illusions among the masses. Yet they could not but become increasingly aware that the revulsion of the working class against fascism and the threat of fascist occupation gave rise to social chauvinism and a renewal of confidence in the "democratic" bourgeoisie permeating the proletarian masses throughout Europe and the U.S. Faced with such a contradiction, the powerful pressures of nationalist backwardness and democratic illusions in the working class tended to pull the sections of the Fourth International apart, some adopting a sectarian stance, others capitulating to the social patriotism which was rampant among the masses. The SWP briefly adopted the "Proletarian Military Policy" which called for military training

under, trade union control, implicitly posing the utopian idea that U.S. workers could fight German fascism without the existence of a workers state in the U.S., through “controlling” U.S. imperialism’s army. British Trotskyist Ted Grant went even further, in one speech referring to British imperialism’s armed forces as “our Eighth Army.” The German IKD returned to outright Menshevism with the theory that fascism had brought about the need for “an intermediate stage fundamentally equivalent to a democratic revolution.” (“Three Theses,” 19 October 1941)

The French Trotskyist movement, fragmented during the course of the war, was the best example of the contradiction. One of its fragments subordinated the mobilization of the working class to the political appetites of the Gaullist wing of the imperialist bourgeoisie; another grouping renounced any struggle within the resistance movement in favor of work exclusively at the point of production and, not recognizing the existing level of reformist consciousness among the workers, adventurously attempted to seize the factories during the “liberation” of Paris while the working masses were out on the streets. The February 1944 European Conference document which was the basis for a fusion between two French groupings to form the Parti Communiste Internationaliste characterized the two groups:

“Instead of distinguishing between the nationalism of the defeated bourgeoisie which remains an expression of its imperialist preoccupations, and the ‘nationalism’ of the masses which is only a reactionary expression of their resistance against exploitation by the occupying imperialism, the leadership of the POI considered as progressive the struggle of its own bourgeoisie...”

“the CCI...under the pretext of guarding intact the heritage of Marxism-Leninism, refused obstinately to distinguish the nationalism of the bourgeoisie from the resistance movement of the masses.”

I. SWP Isolationism

European Trotskyism and American Trotskyism responded in initially different ways to different tasks and problems following World War II. The precarious internationalism of the American SWP, maintained through intimate collaboration with Trotsky during his exile in Mexico, did not survive the assassination of Trotsky in 1940 and the onset of world war. The American Trotskyists retreated into an isolation only partially forced upon them by the disintegration of the European sections under conditions of fascist triumph and illegalization.

Anticipating the difficulties of international coordination during the war, a resident International Executive Committee had been set up in New York. Its only notable achievement, however, appears to have been the convening of an “Emergency Conference” of the International, held 19-26 May 1940 “somewhere in the Western Hemisphere,” “on the initiative of its U.S., Mexican and Canadian sections.” A rump conference attended by less than half of the sections,

the “Emergency Conference” was called for the purpose of dealing with the international ramifications of the Shachtman split in the U.S. section, which had resulted in the defection of a majority of the resident IEC. The meeting solidarized with the SWP in the faction fight and reaffirmed its status as the one U.S. section of the Fourth International. The conference also adopted a “Manifesto of the Fourth International on the Imperialist War and the Proletarian World Revolution” written by Trotsky. Following Trotsky’s death, however, the resident IEC lapsed into oblivion.

At least in hindsight, the American section of the Fourth International should have initiated a clandestine secretariat in a neutral country in Europe, staffed by qualified SWPers and emigres from other sections, to centralize and directly supervise the work of Trotskyists in fascist-occupied countries. But the SWP was content to limit its international activities during the war to the publication in its internal bulletin’s of letters and factional documents from European Trotskyists. The passage of the Voorhis Act in 1941 inhibiting U.S. groups from affiliation with international political organizations—a law which to this day has never been tested—also gave the SWP a rationalization for down-playing its international responsibilities.

The SWP’s work during the war did evidence an internationalist perspective. SWP longshoremen used the opportunity of ships from Vladivostok docking on the West Coast to clandestinely distribute Trotsky’s “Letter to Russian Workers” in Russian to the Soviet seamen. The SWP concentrated its merchant marine comrades on the supply runs to Murmansk until the extremely heavy casualties compelled the party to discontinue the Murmansk concentration. (It was in response to such activities that the GPU was directed to activate the Soblen anti-Trotskyist espionage net. Testimony years afterward revealed that Cannon’s telephone was tapped by the GPU and that the business manager of the SWP’s Fourth International magazine, one “Michael Cort,” was one of the GPU agents.) But the maintenance and direction of the Fourth International was part of the SWP’s internationalist responsibility, and should have been a priority as urgent as the work which the SWP undertook on its own.

The leadership of the SWP came through the war period essentially intact, but reinforced in its insularity and ill-equipped theoretically to deal with the post-war situation.

During the later years of the war and the immediate post-war period, the SWP had registered some impressive successes in implanting its cadres in industry during the boom and in recruiting a new layer of proletarian militants drawn to the Trotskyists because of their opposition to the Communist Party’s policies of social patriotism and class peace.

Optimism and Orthodoxy

SWP entered the post-war period with buoyant optimism about the prospects for proletarian revolution. The 1946 SWP Convention and its resolution, “The

Coming American Revolution,” projected the indefinite continuation of successes for the SWP. The isolationist perspective of the Party was in evidence at the Convention. The necessarily international character of crises and revolutions is recognized, but not the concomitant international character of the vanguard party. The resolution in effect makes excuses for the political backwardness of the U.S. working class while praising its militancy and presents the following syllogism: the decisive battles of the world revolution will be fought in the advanced countries where the means of production are highly developed and the proletariat powerful—above all in the U.S.; therefore all that is necessary is to build the American revolution and world capitalism will be overthrown. Profound impressionism led the SWP to see the world through the eyes of American capitalism which had emerged from the war as the unquestioned pre-eminent capitalist world power.

The post-war stabilization of European capitalism, the emergence of the Stalinist parties as the dominant reformist workers parties in Europe, the expansion of Stalinism in Eastern Europe (apparently flying in the face of the Trotskyist analysis that Stalinism could only betray), the destruction of capitalism by peasant-based nationalist-Stalinist formations in Yugoslavia and China—all these developments posed new theoretical problems for the Trotskyist movement which the SWP, stripped of a layer of talented intellectuals by the petty-bourgeois Shachtman split and shortly thereafter deprived of Trotsky’s guidance, could not handle. The SWP’s immediate response was to retreat into a sterile “orthodoxy” stripped of real theoretical content, thus rendering its isolation more complete.

The 1950’s brought a new wave of spontaneous working-class struggles in West and East Europe, but to the SWP they brought the onset of the Cold War witchhunt: the Smith Act prosecutions of CPers and former CPers; the deadening of every aspect of social and intellectual life; the ‘relentless purge of known “reds” and militants’ from the union movement, severing the SWP’s connection with the working-class movement which had taken years to build up; the dropping away of the whole layer of workers recruited to the SWP during the late 1940’s. The objective pressure to become a mere cheering section for European and colonial developments was strong but the SWP hung on to its verbal orthodox commitment to making the American revolution.

II. The Break in Continuity in Europe

The vulnerability of the European Trotskyist movement to revisionism hinged on the historic weaknesses of the European organizations combined with the thorough shattering of their continuity to the earlier period. When Trotsky in 1934 launched the struggle to found the Fourth International, the European working class, confronted with the decisive choice of socialism or barbarism, lacked a communist leadership. The task facing the Fourth Internationalists was clear: to mobilize the class against the threat of fascism and war, to amass the cadres for the world revolutionary party which would stand for proletarian internationalism in the face of the march toward imperialist war and the social

chauvinist capitulation of the Second and Third Internationals. But Trotsky had noted the immense difficulty for the conscious vanguard to go forward in a period of crushing defeat for the class and the “terrible disproportion between the tasks and the means.” (“Fighting Against the Stream,” April 1939) The weakness of the European movement was exemplified by the French section, which was repeatedly criticized by Trotsky and whose petty-bourgeois “workerist” deviation and dilettantism were the subject of a special resolution at the founding conference of the Fourth International in 1938.

The Fourth International geared itself up for the decisive struggle against fascism and war—and lost. During the course of the war and the Nazi occupations the very rudiments of international, and even national, coordination were destroyed. The International disintegrated into small groups of militants pursuing improvised policies: some opportunist, some heroic. The 65 French and German comrades who were shot by the Gestapo in July 1943 because of their revolutionary defeatist fraternization and the building of a Trotskyist cell in the German armed forces are a monument to the internationalist courage of a weak revolutionary movement fighting against insurmountable odds.

Trotskyist Cadres Decimated

In August 1943 an attempt was made to reestablish the rudiments of organization in Europe. The European Secretariat set up at this meeting in Belgium included exactly one surviving member of the pre-war leadership and largely as a result of the nonexistence of tested cadres, Michel Pablo (Raptis), a skilled clandestine organizer not known for ability as a political leader or theoretician, emerged as the head of the International. When in June 1945 a European Executive Committee met to prepare for the holding of a World Congress, the experienced leading cadres and the most promising of the young Trotskyists (A. Leon, L. Lesoil, W. Held) had been killed at the hands of the Nazis or the GPU. The continuity of Trotskyism in Europe had been broken. This tragic process was duplicated elsewhere with the imprisonment and eventual execution of Ta Thu-tau and the Vietnamese Trotskyists, the virtual extinction of the Chinese Trotskyists and the liquidation of the remaining Russian Trotskyists (including, besides Trotsky, Ignace Reiss, Rudolf Klement and Leon Sedov). The Europeans were apparently so starved for experienced leading cadres that Pierre Frank (leading member of the Molinier group which Trotsky denounced as “demoralized centrists” in 1935 and expelled in 1938 for refusing to break with the French social-democracy after the “French Turn”) was enabled to become a leader of the post-war French section.

At this crucial juncture the intervention and leadership of a truly internationalist American Trotskyist party might have made a great difference. But the SWP, which should have assumed leadership in the International throughout the war years, was sunk in its own national preoccupations. Cannon noted later that the SWP leadership had deliberately built up Pablo’s authority, even going “so far as to soft-pedal a lot of our differences” (June 1953). The urgent responsibility of

the SWP, which whatever its deficiencies was the strongest and most experienced Trotskyist organization, was precisely the opposite.

III. Orthodoxy Reasserted

The immediate task facing the Trotskyists after the war was to reorient its cadres and reassess the situation of the vanguard and the class in light of previous projections. The Trotskyists' expectations of tottering West European capitalist regimes and the renewal of violent class struggle throughout Europe, and especially in Germany where the collapse of Nazi state power left a vacuum, had been confirmed. However the reformists, particularly the Stalinist parties, reasserted themselves to contain the spontaneous working-class upsurges. Control of the French working class through the CGT passed from the social democracy (SFIO) which had controlled the CGT before the war to the French Stalinists. Thus despite the manifest revolutionary spirit of the European working class and the great waves of general strikes, especially in France, Belgium, Greece and Italy, throughout West Europe, the proletariat did not take power and the Stalinist apparatus emerged with new strength and solidity.

The Fourth International responded by falling back on sterile orthodoxy and stubborn refusal to believe that these struggles had been defeated for the immediate period:

"Under these conditions partial defeats...temporary periods of retreat...do not demoralize the proletariat... The repeated demonstration by the bourgeoisie of its inability to restabilize an economy and political regime of the slightest stability offers the workers new opportunities to go over to even higher stages of struggle.

"The swelling of the ranks of the traditional organizations in Europe, above all the Stalinist parties...has reached its peak almost everywhere. The phase of decline is beginning."

(European Executive Committee, April 1946)

Right-opportunist critics in the Trotskyist movement (the German IKD, the SWP's Goldman-Morrow faction) were correct in noting the over-optimism of such an analysis and in pointing out that the traditional reformist leaderships of the working class are always the first inheritors of a renewal of militancy and struggle. Their "solution," however, was to argue for a limitation of the Trotskyist program to bourgeois-democratic demands, and such measures as critical support to the post-war French bourgeois Constitution. Their advocacy of an entrism policy toward the European reformist parties was dismissed out of hand by the majority, which expected the workers to more or less spontaneously regroup under the Trotskyist banner. This attitude prepared the way for a sharp reversal on the entrism question when the implicit position of ignoring the reformists' influence could no longer be maintained.

The Fourth International's immediate post-war perspective was summed up by

Ernest Germain (Mandel) in an article called “The First Phase of the European Revolution” (Fourth International, August 1946). The title already implies the outlook: “the revolution” was implicitly redefined as a metaphysical process enduring continuously and progressing inevitably toward victory, rather than a sharp and necessarily time-limited confrontation over the question of state power, the outcome of which will shape the entire subsequent period.

Stalinophobia

The later, Pabloist, capitulation to Stalinism was prepared by impressionistic overstatement of its opposite: Stalinophobia. In November 1947 Pablo’s International Secretariat wrote that the Soviet Union had become:

“a workers state degenerated to the point where all progressive manifestations of the remains of the October conquest are more and more neutralized by the disastrous effects of the Stalinist dictatorship.”

“What remains of the conquests of October is more and more losing its historic value as a premise for socialist development.”

“...from the Russian occupation forces or from pro-Stalinist governments, which are completely reactionary, we do not demand the expropriation of the bourgeoisie....”

Within the SWP, the rumor circulated that Cannon was flirting with the characterization that the Soviet Union had become a totally degenerated workers state, i.e., a “state capitalist” regime—a position which Natalia Trotsky shortly embraced.

On the question of the Stalinist expansion into East Europe, the Fourth International was united in simple-minded orthodoxy. An extensive discussion of “The Kremlin in Eastern Europe” (Fourth International, November 1946) by E. R. Frank (Bert Cochran) was shrill in anti-Stalinist tone and tended toward the view that the countries occupied by the Red Army would be deliberately maintained as capitalist states. A polemic against Shachtman by Germain dated 15 November 1946 was still more categorical: the theory of “a degenerated workers state being installed in a country where there has not yet previously been a proletarian revolution.” is dismissed, simply, as “absurd.” And Germain rhetorically queries, “Does [Shachtman] really think that the Stalinist bureaucracy has succeeded in overthrowing capitalism in half of our continent?” (*Fourth International*, February 1947)

The methodology here is the same as that pursued, more cynically, by the “International Committee” in later years over the question of Cuba (perplexed? then deny reality!) with the difference that the class character of East Europe, with capitalist economic institutions but the state power held by the occupying army of a degenerated workers state, was far more difficult to understand. Empiricists and renegades, of course, had no difficulty in characterizing the East European states:

“Everyone knows that in the countries where the Stalinists have taken power they have proceeded, at one or another rate of speed, to establish exactly the same economic, political, social regime as exists in Russia. Everyone knows that the bourgeoisie has been or is rapidly being expropriated, deprived of all its economic power, and in many cases deprived of mortal existence... Everyone knows that what remnants of capitalism remain in those countries will not even be remnants tomorrow, that the whole tendency is to establish a social system identical with that of Stalinist Russia,”

(Max Shachtman, “The Congress of the Fourth International,” October 1948 *New Internationalist*)

Excruciating as this ridicule must have, been for them, however, the orthodox Trotskyists were trapped in their analysis because they could not construct a theory to explain the East Europe transformation without embracing non-revolutionary conclusions.

German, as was typical for him in those years, at least posed the theoretical dilemma clearly: is the Trotskyist understanding of Stalinism correct if Stalinism shows itself willing in some cases to accomplish any sort of anti-capitalist social transformation? Clinging to orthodoxy, the Trotskyists had lost a real grasp of theory and suppressed part of Trotsky’s dialectical understanding of Stalinism as a parasitic and counterrevolutionary caste sitting atop the gains of the October Revolution, a kind of treacherous middle-man poised between the victorious Russian proletariat and world imperialism. Having thus reduced dialectical materialism to static dogma, their disorientation was complete when it became necessary to answer German’s question in the affirmative, and the way was prepared for Pabloist revisionism to leap into the theoretical void.

Fourth International Flirts with Tito

Virtually without exception the Fourth International was disoriented by the Yugoslav revolution. After some twenty years of Stalinist monolithism, the Trotskyists were perhaps ill-disposed to scrutinize the anti-Stalin Yugoslav CP too carefully. The Yugoslav Titoists were described as “comrades” and “left centrists,” and Yugoslavia as “a workers state established by a proletarian revolution.” In one of several “Open Letters” to Tito, the SWP wrote: “The confidence of the masses in it [”your party“] will grow enormously and it will become the effective collective expression of the interests and desires of the proletariat of its country.” The Yugoslav revolution posed a new problem (later recapitulated by the Chinese, Cuban and Vietnamese experiences): unlike East Europe, where the social transformations were accomplished by the army of a foreign degenerated workers state, the Yugoslav revolution was clearly an indigenous social revolution which, without the intervention of the working class or the direction of a Trotskyist party, succeeded in establishing a (deformed) workers state. The Fourth International avoided the theoretical problem by

dubbing the revolution “proletarian” and the Titoists “left centrists.” (The SWP avoided the question of China by refusing to unambiguously characterize the Maoist regime as a deformed workers state until 1955. As late as 1954 two articles by the Phillips tendency, characterizing China as state capitalist, were published in the SWP’s Fourth International.)

Again orthodoxy is maintained but robbed of its content. The impulse, resisted until Pablo was to give it consistent expression, was that the ability of non-proletarian, non-Trotskyist forces to accomplish any form of social overturn robbed the Fourth International of its reason for existence. The crucial qualitative distinction between a workers state and a deformed workers state—demarcated in blood in the need for political revolution to open the road to socialist development and the extension of the revolution abroad—had been lost.

IV. Pabloism Conquers

The numerically weak, socially isolated, theoretically unarmed and inexperienced cadres of the post-war Fourth International were easy prey for disorientation and impatience in a situation of repeated pre-revolutionary upsurges whose course they could not influence. Beginning in early 1951 a new revisionism, Pabloism, began to assert itself, responding to the frustrating objective situation by posing an ersatz way out of the isolation of the Fourth International from the main motion of the working class. Pabloism was the generalization of this impulse in a revisionist body of theory offering impressionistic answers which were more consistent than the one-sided orthodoxy of the early post-war Fourth International.

It is crucial that the organizational weakness, lack of deep roots in the proletariat and theoretical incapacity and disorientation which were the precondition for the revisionist degeneration of the Fourth International not be simply equated with the consolidation and victory of that revisionism. Despite grave political errors, the Fourth International in the immediate post-war period was still revolutionary. The SWP and the International clung to sterile orthodoxy as a talisman to ward off non-revolutionary conclusions from world events which they could no longer comprehend. History had demonstrated that at crucial junctures revolutionary Marxists have been able to transcend an inadequate theory: Lenin before April 1917 was theoretically unequipped to project a proletarian revolution in a backward country like Russia; Trotsky until 1933 had equated the Russian Thermidor with a return to capitalism. Pabloism was more than a symmetrical false theory, more than simply an impressionistic over-reaction against orthodoxy; it was a theoretical justification for a non-revolutionary impulse based on giving up a perspective for the construction of a proletarian vanguard in the advanced or the colonial countries.

In January 1951 Pablo ventured into the realm of theory with a document called “Where Are We Going?” Despite whole paragraphs of confused crackpotism and virtually meaningless bombast, the whole revisionist structure emerges:

"The relation of forces on the international chess-board is now evolving to the disadvantage of imperialism.

"An epoch of transition between capitalism and socialism, an epoch which has already begun and is quite advanced... This transformation will probably take an entire period of several centuries and will in the meantime be filled with forms and regimes transitional between capitalism and socialism and necessarily deviating from 'pure' forms and norms.

"The objective process is in the final analysis the sole determining factor, overriding all obstacles of a subjective order.

"The Communist Parties retain the possibility in certain circumstances of roughly outlining a revolutionary orientation."

Pablo's elevation of the "objective process" to "the sole determining factor" reducing the subjective factor (the consciousness and organization of the vanguard party) to irrelevance, the discussion of "several centuries" of "transition" (later characterized by Pablo's opponents as "centuries of deformed workers states") and the suggestion that revolutionary leadership might be provided by the Stalinist parties rather than the Fourth International—the whole analytic structure of Pabloist revisionism emerged.

In another document, "The Coming War," Pablo put forward his policy of "entrism *sui generis*" (entrism of its own kind):

"In order to integrate ourselves into the real mass movement, to work and to remain in the masses' trade unions for example, 'ruses' and 'capitulations' are not only acceptable but necessary."

In essence, the Trotskyists were to abandon the perspective of short-term entrism whose purpose had always been to split the working-class organizations on a hard programmatic basis as a tactic for building the Trotskyist party. The new entrism policy flowed directly from Pablo's analysis. Since the asserted shift in the world relationship of forces in favor of the advance of the revolution would compel the Stalinist parties to play a revolutionary role, it was only logical that the Trotskyists should be a part of such parties pursuing essentially a policy of pressuring the Stalinist apparatus.

All this should have exploded a bomb in the heads of the international Trotskyist cadres. Pablo was after all the head of the International Secretariat, the resident political body of the Fourth International! But there is little evidence of even alarm, let alone the formation of the international anti-revisionist faction which was required. One long document by Ernest Germain ("Ten Theses"), and perhaps some subterranean rumbling, did force Pablo to produce an attempt at orthodoxy on the question of the "transitional period" but no other literary notice was taken of Pablo's most overt assault against the program of Trotskyism.

Germain Resists

In March 1951 Germain produced “Ten Theses,” which was a veiled attack on “Where Are We Going?” but did not attack Pablo or the document by name. Germain restated the Marxist use of “transitional period” as the period between the victory of the revolution (the dictatorship of the proletariat) and the achievement of socialism (the classless society). Without any explicit reference to Pablo’s position, he wrote: “No more than the bourgeoisie will it [Stalinism] survive a war which will be transformed into a world upsurge of the revolution.” Germain insisted on the contradictory Bonapartist character of Stalinism, based on proletarian property forms while safeguarding the privileged position of the bureaucracy against the workers. He emphasized the dual nature of the mass CPs outside the USSR as determined by their proletarian base on the one hand and their subservience to the Stalinist bureaucracies in power on the other.

Germain attempted to present the orthodox response to the Pabloist impulse that the destruction of capitalism in Eastern Europe, China and Yugoslavia without a Trotskyist leadership made the Fourth International superfluous. Again, he did not refer to the positions he was attacking; one would have thought that the “Ten Theses” simply dropped from the sky as an interesting theoretical exercise, rather than in response to the emergence of a revisionist current completely counterposed to Germain’s thrust. Insisting that a new worldwide revolutionary upsurge would not stabilize Stalinism but rather was a mortal danger to it, he wrote:

“It is because the new revolutionary wave contains in embryo the destruction of the Stalinist parties as such that we ought to be much closer today to the Communist workers. This is only one phase of our fundamental task: to construct new revolutionary parties...”
[our emphasis]

“To be ‘closer to the Stalinist workers’ then signifies at the same time to affirm more than ever our own program and our own Trotskyist policy.”

The “Ten Theses” showed that all wings of the Trotskyist movement were still incapable of grasping the nature of the social transformations which had occurred in Eastern Europe (although the analysis of the British Haston-Grant RCP majority, borrowed by the SWP’s Los Angeles Vern-Ryan grouping, achieved the beginning (but only the beginning) of wisdom in recognizing that in the immediate post-war period an examination of native property forms would hardly suffice since the state power in Eastern Europe was a foreign occupying army, the Red Army). In 1951 Germain still considered the process of “structural assimilation” uncompleted (!) and predicted the assimilation of the armies of the East European states into the Soviet army—i.e., that Eastern Europe would simply be incorporated into the Soviet Union. Germain did recognize that the transformation in Eastern Europe destroyed capitalism but contained within it, even in victory, a decisive bureaucratic obstacle to socialist development; he

stressed that the expansion of the USSR's non-capitalist mode of production "is infinitely less important than the destruction of the living workers' movement which has preceded it."

No such inbuilt obstacle was recognized with regard to China and, especially, Yugoslavia. The Trotskyists were unable to disassociate the phenomenon of Stalinism from the person of Stalin; the Titoists' break from the Kremlin obscured any recognition that Yugoslavia would necessarily pursue qualitatively identical domestic and diplomatic policies in safeguarding the interest of its own national bureaucratic regime against the working class. Uneasy about admitting that Stalinist forces heading peasant masses could ever consummate an anti-capitalist revolution, Germain in "Ten Theses" termed both the Yugoslav and Chinese events proletarian revolutions and also argued that "under such conditions, these parties cease being Stalinist parties in the classical sense of the term."

Whereas Pablo took these events as the new revolutionary model which invalidated "pure forms and norms" (i.e., the Russian Revolution) Germain—again without referring to Pablo—stressed that they were as a result of exceptional circumstances which in any case would not be relevant to advanced industrial countries. He contrasted "the de facto United Front which today exists between the colonial revolutions in Asia and the Soviet bureaucracy, which has its objective origin in their being both menaced by imperialism..." with the possibilities for Europe. He concurred in the prediction of an imminent World War III between "the united imperialist front on the one hand and the USSR, the buffer countries and the colonial revolutions on the other" but rather than hailing it, termed it a counterrevolutionary war.

The crux of Germain's argument was:

"What matters above all in the present period is to give the proletariat an international leadership capable of coordinating its forces and proceeding to the world victory of communism. The Stalinist bureaucracy, forced to turn with a blind fury against the first victorious proletarian revolution outside the USSR [Yugoslavia!], is socially incapable of accomplishing any such task. Herein lies the historical mission of our movement.... The historical justification for our movement...resides in the incapacity of Stalinism to overturn world capitalism, an incapacity rooted in the social nature of the Soviet bureaucracy."

With the advantage of hindsight and the experience of the past 20 years—the counterrevolutionary nature of Stalinism reaffirmed most clearly in Hungary in 1956; the 1960 Cuban revolution in which petty-bourgeois nationalism at the head of peasant guerillas uprooted capitalism only to merge with the Stalinist apparatus internally and internationally; the consistently nationalist and Stalinist policies of the Chinese CP in power—it is easy to recognize that "Ten Theses" is flawed in its analysis and predictions. What is much more important, however, is the document's consistent and deliberate non-factional tone which presaged

Germain's refusal to place himself in the anti-Pabloist camp. Divorced from the determination to fight for a correct line in the Fourth International, Germain's theoretical defense of the necessity of Trotskyism meant very little. This was Pabloism merely at one remove, the denial of the subjective factor in the revolutionary process.

Third World Congress

The Third World Congress of the Fourth International was held in August-September 1951. The main political report attempted to distinguish between the Communist Parties and "reformist parties" on the grounds that only the former were contradictory, and projected that under the pressure of a strong mass upsurge the CPs could become revolutionary parties. The opportunist nature of Pablo's version of an entrism tactic was sharply revealed in the repudiation of the principled entrism goal of sharp polarization and split: "The possibilities of important splits in the CPs...are replaced by a leftward movement within the CPs among its rank and file." There was no recognition of decisive deformations in the East European and Chinese workers states; thus implicitly the Congress posed only a quantitative difference between the Soviet Union of Lenin and the degenerated and deformed workers states. The report projected the possibility that Tito might "head a regroupment of revolutionary forces independent of capitalism and of the Kremlin...playing a major role in the formation of a new revolutionary leadership." There was no mention of the perspective of permanent revolution for the colonial countries.

The application of Pablo's policy of "entrism sui generis" was elaborated in the Austrian Commission:

"The activity of our members in the SP will be governed by the following directives: A. Not to come forward as Trotskyists with our full program. B. Not to push forward programmatic and principled questions..."

No quantity of verbal orthodoxy in resolutions could have any longer obscured the vision of those who wanted to see.

The Parti Communiste Internationaliste of France submitted Germain's "Ten Theses" for a vote (after Germain himself had apparently backed out of doing so) and proposed amendments to the main document. No vote was taken on the "Ten Theses" or the French amendments. The PCI voted against adopting the thrust of the main document; it was the only section to do so.

In the months that followed, the Pabloist line was elaborated along the lines already made clear before and at the Third World Congress:

"We are entering [the Stalinist parties] in order to remain there for a long time banking on the great possibility of seeing these parties, placed under new conditions ["a generally irreversible pre-revolutionary period"], develop centrist tendencies which will lead a

whole stage of the radicalization of the masses and of the objective revolutionary processes...”

(Pablo, Report to the 10th Plenum of the International Executive Committee, February 1952)

“Caught between the imperialist threat and the colonial revolution, the Soviet bureaucracy found itself obliged to ally with the second against the first... The disintegration of Stalinism within these parties ought not to be understood...as an organizational disintegration...or a public break with the Kremlin but as a progressive internal transformation.”

(“The Rise and Decline of Stalinism,” International Secretariat, September 1953)

V. The Anti-Pabloists

With the capitulation of Germain, whose role in the preliminary conflicts over Pabloist policies is ambiguous but in whom the French appear to have placed some degree of confidence, the task of fighting Pabloism fell to the French PCI majority of Bleibtreu-Lambert and the American SWP. Despite a considerable body of mythology to the contrary, both the PCI and SWP vacillated when revisionism manifested itself at the head of the Fourth International, balking only at applying it to their own sections. Both groups compromised themselves by uneasy acquiescence (combined in the case of the PCI with sporadic resistance) to Pablo’s policies until the suicidal organizational consequences to their sections necessitated sharp fights. Both abdicated the responsibility to take the fight against revisionism into every body and every section of the Fourth International and both retreated from the struggle by the foundation of the “International Committee” on the basis of “the principles of orthodox Trotskyism.” The IC from its inception was only a paper international tendency consisting of those groups which had already had splits between pro-Pabloist and orthodox wings.

PCI Fights Pablo

The PCI majority, having had been placed in receivership by the International Secretariat (which had installed the Pablo-loyal minority led by Mestre and Frank as the leadership of the French section), continued to claim agreement with the line of the Third World Congress, arguing that Pablo and the IS and IEC were violating its decisions! According to the French, Pabloism “utilizes the confusions and contradictions of the World Congress—where it could not impose itself—in order to assert itself after the World Congress.” (undated “Declaration of the Bleibtreu-Lambert Tendency on the Agreements Concluded at the IEC,” March or April 1952)

An important letter dated 16 February 1952 from Renard on behalf of the PCI majority to Cannon appealed to the SWP. Renard’s letter claimed agreement with

the Third World Congress, including its French Commission, and contrasted the supposedly non-Pabloist World Congress (citing vague platitudes to demonstrate its presumably orthodox thrust) with Pablo's subsequent actions and line in the IEC and IS. Renard asserted that "Pabloism did not win out at the Third World Congress." (He wisely did not attempt to explain why his organization voted against the main Congress documents!) The main argument of the letter is an appeal against the Pabloist international leadership's intervention into the French national section.

Cannon's reply of 29 May accused the PCI majority of Stalinophobic opportunism in the union movement (a bloc with progressive anti-communists against the CP) and denied the existence of any such thing as Pabloism.

The PCI majority evidenced a clear understanding of the implications of the Pabloist entrisism. In a polemic against minority theoretician Mestre the majority had written:

"If these ideas are correct, stop chattering about the tactic of entrisism, even entrisism sui generis, and pose clearly our new tasks: that of a more consistent tendency, not even a left opposition...whose role is to aid Stalinism to overcome its hesitation and to pose under the best conditions the decisive clash with the bourgeoisie... If Stalinism has changed...[it means that] it no longer reflects the particular interests of a bureaucratic caste whose very existence depends on the unstable equilibrium between classes, that it is no longer bonapartist, but that it reflects solely...the defense of the workers state. That such a transformation should be produced without the intervention of the Soviet proletariat...but on the contrary by an evolution of the bureaucracy itself...would lead us not merely to revise the Transitional Program [but] all the works of Leon Trotsky since 1923 and the foundation of the Fourth International."

("First Reflections of Zig Zag," PCI Internal Bulletin No. 2, February 1952)

But the PCI majority, not unlike the SWP, demonstrated a failure of concrete internationalism when faced with the prospect of all alone carrying through the fight against Pabloism.

On 3 June 1952 the PCI majority asked for recognition of two French sections of the Fourth International, thus permitting the PCI majority to carry out its own policies in France. This was in clear violation of the founding statutes of the Fourth International and meant the liquidation of the International as a disciplined world body. What was required was an international faction fight over the political line of the Fourth International. But the PCI majority was unwilling to subordinate work in France to the crucial fight for the legitimacy and continuity of the Fourth International. Pablo's refusal to accede to this demand led directly to the split of the PCI majority.

SWP Enters the Struggle

The SWP only joined the fight against revisionism when a pro-Pabloist tendency, the Clarke wing of the Cochran-Clarke faction, manifested itself within the American party. In his reply to Renard dated 29 May 1952 Cannon had said:

“We do not see [”any kind of pro-Stalinist tendency“] in the International leadership of the Fourth International nor any sign nor symptom of it. We do not see any revisionism [in the documents]...we consider these documents to be completely Trotskyist.... It is the unanimous opinion of the leading people in the SWP that the authors of these documents have rendered a great service to the movement.”

The story that the SWP had prepared some amendments to the Third World Congress documents which Clarke (SWP representative to the International) had burned instead of presenting is quite possibly true but not very significant, in view of Cannon’s declaration of political allegiance to Pablo when it counted, in refusing to solidarize with the anti-Pabloist PCI majority.

Against Cochran-Clarke’s advocacy of an orientation toward the CP fellow-travellers, the SWP majority affirmed support to the Pabloist CP entrism tactic in general but insisted on a kind of American exceptionalism, contrasting the mass European parties with the pathetic American CP milieu, lacking a working-class base and peopled with shoddy third-rate intellectuals.

In response to the Cochran-Clarke threat, Cannon set about forming a faction in the SWP aided by the Weiss leadership in Los Angeles. Cannon sought to line up the old party cadre around the question of conciliation to Stalinism and appealed to the party trade unionists like Dunne and Swabeck by drawing an analogy between the need for factional struggle within the party and the struggle within the class against the reformists and sellouts as parallel processes of factional struggle against alien ideology. He told the May 1953 SWP Plenum:

“During the course of the past year, I had serious doubts of the ability of the SWP to survive.... I thought that our 25 year effort...had ended in catastrophic failure, and that, once again, a small handful would have to pick up the pieces and start all over again to build the new cadre of another party on the old foundations.”

(Closing speech, 30 May)

But Cannon chose another road. Instead of pursuing the necessary struggle wherever it might lead, Cannon made a bloc with the Dobbs-Kerry-Hansen apparatus over the organizationally liquidationist implications of the Cochran-Clarke line. In return for their support Cannon promised the routinist, conservative Dobbs administration total control of the SWP with no further interference from him (“a new regime in the party”).

The SWP’s response to finding the dispute in the International reflecting itself inside the American section was to deepen its isolationism into virulent anti-

internationalism. Cannon's speech to the SWP majority caucus on 18 May 1953 stated, "We don't consider ourselves an American branch office of an international business firm that receives orders from the boss" and extolled discussion in which "we work out, if possible [...], a common line." Cannon denied the legitimacy of an international leadership and referred to "a few people in Paris." He contrasted the Fourth International with Lenin's Comintern, which had state power and a leadership whose authority was widely recognized, and thus denied that the contemporary Fourth International could be a democratic centralist body.

Cannon belatedly took exception to Pablo's conduct against the French majority, but only over the organizational question in keeping with the proposition that the International leadership should not intervene in the affairs of national sections. He wrote:

"...we were flabbergasted at the tactics used in the recent French conflict and split, and at the inconceivable organizational precedent established there. That is why I delayed my answer to Renard so long. I wanted to help the IS politically, but I didn't see how I could sanction the organizational steps taken against the majority of an elected leadership. I finally resolved the problem by just ignoring that part of Renard's letter."

("Letter to Tom," 4 June 1953)

The "Letter to Tom" also reiterated the position that the Third World Congress was not revisionist.

The crucial defects in the anti-Pabloist struggle of the PCI and SWP were duly utilized by the Pabloists. The 14th IEC Plenum took Cannon to task for his concept of the International as a "federative union." It noted that the SWP had never opposed the Pabloist entrism policy in principle and accused the SWP-PCI of an unprincipled bloc on China. Seizing on the SWP's one-sided orthodoxy (Hansen's defense of an SWP majorityite's formulation that Stalinism is "counterrevolutionary through and through"—a characterization which fits only the CIA!) the Pabloists were able to cloak their liquidation of an independent Trotskyist program with pious reaffirmations of the contradictions of Stalinism as a counterrevolutionary caste resting atop the property forms established by the October Revolution.

IC Formed

Following the Cochran-Clarke split, the SWP precipitously broke publicly with Pablo. On 16 November 1953 the Militant carried "A Letter to Trotskyists Throughout the World" which denounced Cochran-Clarke and Pablo and belatedly solidarized with the "unjustly expelled" PCI majority. The SWP's previous characterizations of the Third World Congress as "completely Trotskyist" necessitated an attempt in this so-called "Open Letter" to locate the emergence of Pabloism after the Congress, which doomed the SWP to present a somewhat

unconvincing case leaning heavily on a leaflet or two of the Pabloist French minority from 1952. At about the same time the SWP produced "Against Pabloite Revisionism" dated November 1953, which contained a more competent analysis of Pablo's liquidationist accommodation to Stalinism:

"The conception that a mass Communist Party will take the road to power if only sufficient mass pressure is brought to bear is false. It shifts the responsibility for revolutionary setbacks from the leadership to the mass...

"The working class is transformed [by Pablo's theories] into a pressure group, and the Trotskyists into a pressure grouping along with it which pushes a section of the bureaucracy toward the revolution. In this way, the bureaucracy is transformed from a block and a betrayer of the revolution into an auxiliary motor force of it."

In 1954 the "International Committee" was formed. It included the French PCI majority, the American SWP (fraternal) and the Healy (Burns) grouping in England. The latter did not play any significant or independent role in the fight against revisionism. The Healy-Lawrence split from the disintegrating Revolutionary Communist Party after the war, impelled by the Healy-Lawrence faction's deep entrust perspective toward the British Labour Party, had been backed by Pablo's International Secretariat, which recognized two sections in Britain and gave them equal representation on the IEC. Healy was Cannon's "man" in England and had been consistently supported by the SWP in disputes within the RCP. When the SWP broke from Pablo, the Healy-Lawrence faction split, Healy aligning with the SWP and Lawrence with Pablo (Lawrence later went over to Stalinism as did the PCI minority's Mestre). Despite being part of the new anti-Pabloist international bloc, the Healy group continued its arch-Pabloist Labour Party opportunism. It had no weight in the IC bloc until its recruitment of an impressive layer of CP intellectuals and trade unionists (most of whom it later lost) following the 1956 Hungarian Revolution made it considerably more substantial in the British left.

The IC also claimed the adherence of the Chinese (emigre) section, which had already undergone a split, and the small Swiss section.

The IC managed to produce a couple of internal bulletins in early 1954 but never met as a real international body, nor was a centralized leadership ever elected. The tactic adopted by the SWP was to boycott the Fourth World Congress, as merely a meeting of Pablo's faction having no legitimacy as the Fourth International.

The world movement paid a high price for this evasion. To cite only one example: Ceylon. The Ceylonese LSSP took a non-factional position on Pabloism, appealing to the SWP not to split and to attend the Fourth Congress. A hard fight should have been aggressively pushed toward the passive Ceylonese doubters, forcing a polarization and forging a hard cadre in the struggle. Instead the Ceylonese drifted along with Pablo. Some seven years later, the revolutionary

reputation of Trotskyism was besmirched in the eyes of militants throughout the world by the LSSP's entry into the bourgeois Ceylonese coalition government, precipitating a last-minute split by the international Pabloist leadership. Had a hard principled anti-revisionist fight been waged in the Ceylon section in 1953, a hard revolutionary organization with an independent claim to Trotskyist continuity might have been created then, preventing the association of the name of Trotskyism with the fundamental betrayal of the LSSP.

Thus the anti-revisionist fight was deliberately not carried to the world movement, the IC consisting mainly of those groups which had already had their splits over the application of Pabloist policies in their own countries, and the struggle to defeat revisionism and reconstruct the Fourth International on the basis of authentic Trotskyism was aborted.

From Flirtation to Consummation

In 1957 Pablo's International Secretariat and the SWP flirted with possible reunification (the Hansen-Kolpe correspondence). The basis at that time was formal orthodoxy—the similarity of line between the IS and SWP in response to the 1956 Hungarian Revolution. The SWP, perhaps naively expecting a repetition of Clarke's 1953 position on the possibility of self-liquidation of the Stalinist bureaucracies, tended to accept the IS's formally Trotskyist conclusions over Hungary as good coin. These early reunification overtures came to naught because of the opposition of the British and French IC groups, as well as Cannon's suspicions that Pablo was maneuvering. The issue was posed in a defective way—simply apparent empirical agreement without an examination of past differences and present motion.

When the question of reunification, consummated in 1963 with the formation of the United Secretariat, came up again, the entire political terrain had shifted. The IS and the SWP found themselves in agreement over Cuba. But the basis was no longer an apparent convergence on orthodoxy, but the SWP's abandonment of Trotskyism to embrace Pabloist revisionism (which the SWP in its class-collaborationist line on the Vietnamese war has now transcended on the path to outright reformism).

The basis for the 1963 reunification was a document titled "For Early Reunification of the World Trotskyist Movement—Statement by the Political Committee of the SWP," 1 March 1963. The key new line was section 13:

"Along the road of a revolution beginning with simple democratic demands and ending in the rupture of capitalist property relations, guerilla warfare conducted by landless peasant and semi-proletarian forces, under a leadership that becomes committed to carrying the revolution through to a conclusion, can play a decisive role in undermining and precipitating the downfall of a colonial and semi-colonial power. This is one of the main lessons to be drawn from experience since the Second World War. It must be consciously incorporated

into the strategy of building revolutionary Marxist parties in colonial countries.”

In “Toward Rebirth of the Fourth International,” 12 June 1963, the Spartacist tendency counterposed:

“Experience since the Second World War has demonstrated that peasant-based guerilla warfare under petit-bourgeois leadership can in itself lead to nothing more than an anti-working-class bureaucratic regime. The creation of such regimes has come about under the conditions of decay of imperialism, the demoralization and disorientation caused by Stalinist betrayals, and the absence of revolutionary Marxist leadership of the working class. Colonial revolution can have an unequivocally progressive revolutionary significance only under such leadership of the revolutionary proletariat. For Trotskyists to incorporate into their strategy revisionism on the proletarian leadership in the revolution is a profound negation of Marxism-Leninism no matter what pious wish may be concurrently expressed for ‘building revolutionary Marxist parties in colonial countries.’ Marxists must resolutely oppose any adventurist acceptance of the peasant-guerilla road to socialism--historically akin to the Social Revolutionary program on tactics that Lenin fought. This alternative would be a suicidal course for the socialist goals of the movement, and perhaps physically for the adventurers.”

Ironically, the SWP’s further rightist evolution leads it to now repudiate the basic line of section 13, from the other side—the U.Sec.’s advocacy of petty-bourgeois armed struggle is far too adventurous for the legalistic SWP which aims to become the mass party of American reformism.

Spartacist and the Fourth International

In his struggle to found the Fourth International, Trotsky repeatedly underscored the imperative need for revolutionary organization on an international basis. Prolonged national isolation within one country must ultimately disorient, deform and destroy any revolutionary grouping no matter how subjectively steadfast. Only a principled and disciplined international collaboration can provide a counterbalance to the fierce pressures toward insularity and social chauvinism generated by the bourgeoisie and its’ ideological agents within the working-class movement. As Trotsky recognized, those who deny the need for a programmatically founded democratic centralist world party deny the Leninist concept of the vanguard party itself. The destruction of the Fourth International by Pabloist revisionism, paralleled by organizational fracturing into numerous competing international blocs, necessitates unremitting struggle for its rebirth.

In our ten year history, the Spartacist tendency has faced and resisted powerful objective pressures toward abandonment of an internationalist perspective. Cut off from the possibility of disciplined international ties as a result of the orga-

nizational sectarianism and subsequent political degeneration of Gerry Healy's International Committee, the Spartacist League has refused to passively acquiesce to the national isolation forced upon us. We have emphatically rejected the ersatz "internationalism" which achieves its international connections at the price of a federalist non-aggression pact thus renouncing in advance the struggle for disciplined international organization. We have sought to develop fraternal ties with groupings in other countries as part of a process of clarification and polarization. Our aim is the crystallization of a cohesive democratic centralist international tendency based on principled programmatic unity, the embryo of a reborn Fourth International.

The current cracking of the several international "Trotskyist" blocs now provides heightened opportunity for the Spartacist tendency to intervene in the world movement. Our history and program can serve as a guide for currents now in motion towards authentic Trotskyism, because despite involuntary national isolation for a time, we upheld our internationalist determination and continued to wage a principled fight against revisionism.

The shattering of the revisionists' and centrists' pretensions to international organization—the revelation that the United Secretariat, the International Committee, etc. have been nothing more than federated rotten blocs—combined with the worldwide renewal of proletarian combativeness in a context of sharpened inter-imperialist rivalry and intensified deep-seated capitalist crisis, provide an unprecedented objective opportunity for the crystallization and development of the Spartacist tendency internationally. As the political corpses of the revisionist blocs continue to decay, the Fourth International, world party of socialist revolution, must be reborn.

FOR THE REBIRTH OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL!