

National Caucus of Labor Committees  
National Discussion Information

TITLE: HOW THE WORKERS LEAGUE DECAYED

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SUBJECT: The use of the Wohlforth group's political degeneration as a clinical study of the ways in which certain common-place mistakes of newly-developed revolutionaries almost inevitably lead to their political decay into either opportunists or sectarian cretins (impotent would-be opportunists).

PURPOSE: Too few members of the Labor Committees appreciate the decisive importance of that organic layer of potential revolutionary cadres who demonstrate their superiority over "independents" by their tendency to seek out the "best available choice" of revolutionary organization. No revolutionary organization worth that name can be built and no revolution won without our work in winning over the layers of newly-radicalized individuals currently being attracted to the peripheries of the CP, SWP-YSA, PLP as well as our own organization. Unless we catch these individuals before they become totally corrupted by centrist organization's internal life -- forget the future of the human race in this country!

One of the main problems to be dealt with in this connection is the appearance of the members of most cadre-organizations today. Because of their crimes and apparent worthlessness, some of our members are more sympathetic to "independents" not including but typified by the radical movement's most notorious political whore, Stanley Aronowitz, the very types in today's movement who are rightly regarded from the vantage-point of history as incurably right-Menshevik wretches in the final analysis. Therefore, it is absolutely essential that our members be able to distinguish between real cadres (of which Wohlforth, for example, was once one) and the dead and rotting corpses of former potential cadres, which most hard-line sect members represent today. Do not use the fact of Fred Halstead's corruption to write off more viable potential cadres around the SWP-YSA, for example.

HOW THE WORKERS LEAGUE DECAYED

Preface: Just because the Workers League is of no importance to the socialist movement, it has, like a corpse, distinct advantages as a subject for the dissection-table. No one could care if the subject were destroyed during the course of the lecture. Therefore, undertaking the study of a certain important disease, for which a total dissection of the subject is required, we naturally use the corpse of a victim of that disease.

The object here is to show one commonplace way in which potential revolutionary socialist cadres are systematically disoriented in certain organizations, deprived of the capacity of moral and rational judgment to the extent that, like members of the Workers League, they become political "sawdust cases," reduced to the most pitiful "phrase-mongering and clowning."

A word on the historiography. Fools imagine that the authentic interpretation of history depends upon support for conclusions obtained from the literal reading of political resolutions, other published materials, correspondence, and so forth. One must bear in mind that nearly all political resolutions, virtually all published explanations, and most correspondence is designed for the purpose of deceiving -- usually to deceive the authors above all others. Nettl, writing of SPD conference resolutions often, in his Rosa Luxemburg, uses the phrase "self-consoling rhetoric." No term could be more appropriately applied to the extant documentation on the subject before us from SWP, International Committee, Wohlforthite and Spartacist sources. Real history begins with an effort to discover what these various documents are attempting to conceal, an effort to discover why the SWP authors, the Wohlforthites, etc., each lie in the particular way they do.

Fortunately, the present writer is specially advantaged as a first-hand observer of many of the important facts unknown, to a large extent, by any of the present SWP leadership, any of the Wohlforthites, Healy, etc. These matters, first reported here, are often enough the most important, formative developments behind the story to be told. Even so, present SWP "accountants", Healy, and others could easily verify the accuracy of the facts I have disclosed here for the first time to the extent that these fresh disclosures of mine provide the solution to a number of mysteries which must have perplexed them all for the better part of five to ten years. It would be possible to infer the necessity of developments of which I have first-hand knowledge from the evidence otherwise at hand. The fact that I have first-hand knowledge serves to underline the value of those methods of inference.

So that there may be no doubt of the accuracy of this account, copies are being circulated to the SWP, Workers League, Spartacist and G. Healy. Let them challenge the facts if they delude themselves they can!

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The Workers League, publisher of the weekly Bulletin tabloid, is a small performing road company whose essential political position is vulgarly squatting outside the real universe. Thus freed from the encumbrances of earthly astronomical science, the Bulletin has asserted that the planets of the solar system actually orbit about the person of one Michel Pablo of Paris. Recently, to celebrate an increase of several individuals in its membership, the Bulletin has offered more ambitious revelations in cosmology: that the entire universe orbits about the corpse of Josef Stalin.

Recently, on God knows what authority, the editors of the Bulletin took it into their heads to edify their readers on the present Greek situation. No doubt, this presumptuousness signifies that the Bulletin's supporters sense their kinship to those legendary Greek gods who also assumed the forms of geese and cattle to annoy the mortal inhabitants of Earth.

Actually, the Spirit does not become Flesh, but Ectoplasm. From mid-1966 until the summer of 1968, the appearance of Bulletin spectres was chiefly limited to places where death was being celebrated, as at business meetings of the New York Social Service Employees' Union. In fall of 1968, Bulletin spooks became emboldened to leave the graveyard for meetings of the Labor Committee -- until they were exorcized for their pranks. In recent months, it is YSA'ers functioning as official SMC necromancers who have called up the greatest number of Bulletin lost souls. Notable, however, is the recent, April, benefit spectacle for New York's Mayor Lindsay, where an evening's performance by the city's most exotic specimens of the Walking Political Undead was capped by Victor Gotbaum's calling up of two ghastly Bulletin spokesmen in a row!

In the instance of the chief Bulletin spokesman, Tim Wohlforth, the Charles Addams tradition goes back to his political infancy in the Dismal Swamp, Max Schachtman's organization, in the 1950's, of political Artful Dodgers. Schachtman, sensible of his impending political death, elected to conduct his entire organization in a do-it-yourself burial party into the Socialist Party. Three young Schachtmanites declared themselves unprepared to die in so horrible a fashion and immediately applied for membership in the SWP. In descending order of political sanity, those three were Tim Wohlforth, James Robertson (idiot-savant curator of the Spartacist morgue) and Shane Mage (vacantly leering among the lotuses). Of these three, Wohlforth was always the key figure, whose boldness in facing such veteran scoundrels as Schachtman and Draper was the decisive performance in winning Robertson and numbers of others to break toward the SWP.

Otherwise, Tim, in writing of this split, takes absolutely too much credit for the establishment of the Young Socialist organization. The brains and proprietor of the whole enterprise was then-leader of the SWP, Murry Weiss, who guided Wohlforth as a farmer guides a bull to the cow in heat -- Wohlforth thus exaggerates when he says, "I built that herd." Wohlforth and his handful of cohorts represented to Weiss

the sort of dupes he needed to capitalize on the 1954-56 "split in the Stalin monolith," to put the SWP in contention for first place in the U.S. left-radical movement of the 1960's. The SWP saw the potential for building a youth organization, but lacked any youth of its own. Wohlforth et. al. thus presented themselves as the necessary more-or-less live decoys Weiss hoped to use to lure Communist youth toward the SWP. Wohlforth, in reporting what he did, etc., during the pre-1960 period, seems incredibly ignorant of the fact that what Wohlforth did, with few exceptions, was read the script given to him by the stage-manager of the entire affair, Murry Weiss.

While I was, from my first serious discussions with Weiss, in 1955, always in profound disagreement with him on the issue of the comprehension of and approach to conjunctural perspectives, he and my former wife were part of the same close circle of personal friends, so that our discussions during that period have critical bearing on the formation of the YSA, a much better view of that process, in view of my understanding of Weiss's mistaken approaches, than Wohlforth or any present SWP leaders.

Just because the Wohlforthites were essentially merely organizational cannon-fodder for the SWP during that period, the SWP leaders were super-cautious about raising the issue of Schachtman's anti-Communism with Wohlforth & Company in the early stages. The SWP leaders correctly assumed that Wohlforth and others would gradually replace Schachtmanite jargon with SWP jargon in time; they were content not to risk the loss of their decoys, a risk of any serious attack on the underlying Schachtmanite method which Tim never really overcame, whatever superficial changes in his use of this or that jargon. Weiss knew this very well; Bert Deck, Weiss's field manager in the YSA and "Fair Play For Cuba," pointed out this feature of the Wohlforthite group in the Spring of 1961 -- agreeing with a suggestion I had made to him on this point.

During late 1959 and 1960, Weiss's competitors for inheriting sole leadership of the SWP (from the aging James P. Cannon) were worked into a stage of accumulated rages over Weiss's apparent success in the "Regroupment" tactics during the 1956-58 period. An accurate reading of Cannon's political character would have assured them that Cannon never intended to pass the SWP leadership on to Weiss; a lower-case August Bebel, Cannon was looking for an heir of Ebert's qualifications; as published correspondence from Cannon on the SWP as a "business" suffices to illustrate. Weiss, in Cannon's view, was the best man for pulling an ambitious caper; Dobbs was the solid business manager who Cannon saw -- with some justice -- as being best qualified to hold the organization together. In any case, Weiss had absolutely no political perspective, merely a slicker style of operating.

With the collapse of the Independent Socialist Party tactic (the 1968 Corliss Lamont campaign) in 1959, Weiss's opponents began closing in around him menacingly, forcing some organizational concessions from him. In the course of such bureaucratic maneuvers and counter-maneuvers, Weiss began destroying his own organizational strength with "chess moves" whose plain purpose was to show that he was not building the

YSA leadership as an organizational "power base" of youth against the SWP leadership "old fogies." There was some justice for demands to this effect from Weiss's opponents, since the Wohlforthites up to that time had hardly concealed their admiration for Weiss as the only competent leader in the SWP.

Thus, the Wohlforthites were cast loose from the shirttails of "father" Weiss, abandoned to their own resources -- and thus fell back upon the anti-Communist methodology which they had brought into the SWP and had never really examined since. The result was the position developed by Shange Mage (Wohlforth's tame "honey-ant" of pure Schachtmanism), a viciously anti-Communist analysis of Cuba from a classical Schachtmanite standpoint.

From late 1960 on, all the various maneuvering factions in contention for SWP leadership vied with one another in being the "best" baiters of the Wohlforthites and Mage's odious Cuba position. To complicate this, the Gerry Healy leadership of the British Socialist Labour League soon reached across the seas to get into the act, making Wohlforth the poor stooge of his own unprincipled "alliance" with Healy.

The anti-Weiss forces wished to lever Wohlforth out of leadership control of the YSA. This could have been accomplished quickly and easily, by opening up a YSA pre-convention discussion on the Cuba issue, and letting this political issue determine the newly elected leadership of the YSA. Wohlforth would have been remarkably fortunate to obtain even a seat for himself. This would have meant, the anti-Weiss cliques rather justly feared, a virtual control of the YSA by the pro-Weiss forces within the YSA. Therefore, a variety of otherwise inexplicable organizational arrangements were made at the time of the 1961 SWP convention.

Bert Deck, SWP field organizer of the Young Socialist tactic under Weiss, was dumped from the SWP National Committee with the aid of a vicious personal falsehood deliberately circulated at the SWP Convention nominating commission; Deck was thereby dropped before the lie could be detected and exposed. An age-rule limiting SWP membership in the YSA was "28" tailored specifically to get out a maximum of Weiss supporters without getting out too many supporters of the other SWP cliques. Two of Larry Kelley's trained anti-Weiss youth hacks from Boston, Sheppard and Camejo, were imported over the backs of the entire YSA membership into the leadership of the YSA. The YSA was put under total SWP trusteeship, under Cannon's personal organizational hatchetman, Carl Feingold. Feingold was imported to see to it that both the Wohlforthites and Weissites were eliminated from the YSA leadership, at which point he was to turn total leadership over to Sheppard and Camejo. After this was accomplished, Cannon and Feingold were both dumped from the SWP leadership -- which is how the SWP leadership expresses its gratitude for a job well done.

Wohlforth, assimilating this SWP lesson in Mafia-style morality,

prompted turned himself into one of the worst, most unprincipled organizational swindlers and doubt-dealers in the SWP -- he showed all the necessary criminal instincts, but lacked the weapons, to become a modern SWP leader. The SWP today does not, of course, suppress the facts of Wohlforth's organizational atrocities during that period -- it merely omits to give its own leadership the credit due in Wohlforth's achievements in crime.

The SWP leadership does not deserve full credit for Wohlforth's immorality. During this same period, ostracized by everyone in the SWP and YSA, the Wohlforthites became thus the total organizational captives of Gerry Healy, proprietor of the British Socialist Labour League. In organizational matters, this Healy is a Fagin of the accomplishments to make the SWP leaders look like innocent babes; in fact, the only less scrupulous individual in the self-styled "Trotskyist" movement throughout the past quarter-century in the entire world is the individual Healy most invidiously fears, Michel Pablo.

Healy's SWP stooges were to him an asset mixed with liabilities.

During this period, a majority of the members of the Wohlforthite minority could not help but recognize plain signs pointing to their early expulsion. It was also obvious that after crushing Weiss at the 1961 (not failing to exploit Weiss' illness with a stroke for this accomplishment), the rest of the SWP leadership had one main purpose in view: to clean out every potential source of opposition to itself from the national organization. The victorious cabal (Dobbs, Kerry, Hansen) had to proceed cautiously for a year or so; Weiss was still in the SWP leadership, and his recovery from his stroke was much more rapid and extensive than his opponents had mistakenly hoped. Their own forces were temporarily demoralized by the degrading crimes they had recently undertaken to commit. An open move toward a general purge and Weiss would probably have started a resistance struggle he might easily have won (in late 1961 or early 1962). So, the victorious cabal contented itself, as Stalin had done with his opponents before (or as any corporate bureaucratic factioneer of experience does), to leave them alone "physically," but to conduct the process of villification, degradation, demoralization and fragmentation of those forces intended for "liquidation."

The Wohlforth group, the object of everyone's villification, could not ignore the reality as most other actual and potential oppositionist victims of the purge did: they were soon to be tossed out of the SWP as the precedent needed by the ruling cabal for a more general "bloodletting." Inevitably, sensible of their imminent destiny, the majority of people in the Wohlforthite faction proved sensible enough to begin considering what forms of political existence might be arranged in the outside world, and began to prepare themselves psychologically for the pending expulsion or split.

This discussion within the Wohlforthite minority ranks hardly agreed with Healy's script for his U.S. stooges. Healy, it should be emphasized, instinctively despised the entire Wohlforthite minority from the standpoint of his paranoid attitudes toward educated people generally, and thus cared far, far less about their political development than Weiss had during the pre-1960 period. For Healy, the Wohlforthites were simply human rubbish to be used: whether or not they were destroyed in the process meant nothing to him. Healy drafted the script for his U.S. stooges on the basis of certain complex maneuvers in which he was involved in several countries. Since Dobbs's previous visit to Britain, Healy had developed certain illusions about what he identified as the "proletarian kernel" of the SWP leadership, and foolishly imagined that he could drive a wedge, through Dobbs, that would prevent the SWP from aligning with Pablo and Mandel (see below). On the basis of this particular tactical delusion, it was Healy's policy that the Wohlforthite minority must always crawl on all fours to Dobbs, and otherwise conduct themselves as the most vicious Weiss-baiters.

Over this, Robertson and Wohlforth split. Suicidal seizures are not among Robertson's particular psychotic episode repertoires. Wohlforth's "Achilles Heel" is the fact that he is self-consciously a mere publicist without independent theoretical or political-organizational talents of his own. Without a "father" to guide him in these matters, Wohlforth is helpless, demoralized -- a key to his later degeneration in the spring of 1966. Robertson, a poor man's Nero in his own tiny sect, despises servility in his masters or those he regards as his peers. Wohlforth's servility before Healy turned Robertson away from Wohlforth (as Wohlforth's firmness in face of hooligans like Schachtman and Draper had won Robertson's earlier admiration.) Robertson declined to degrade himself then as he later refused to degrade himself publicly on Healy's demand in April, 1966. (Robertson insists on choosing the place and form of his own self-degradations, a preference which Wohlforth characterizes as a want of "internationalism.") The majority of the group, disgusted with Wohlforth's sliminess, went over to Robertson.

Following the split between Robertson and Wohlforth, Wohlforth, as a part of Healy's ill-conceived scheme to make an eventual bloc with Farrell Dobbs, publicly fingered the Robertson faction for expulsion! Later, the Wohlforthites produced a variety of prose pieces purporting to explain the "principled politics" involved; this double-talk never really even convinced the Wohlforthites. From the time of the split in the Wohlforthite faction, Wohlforth's tiny group stunk too much for anyone in the SWP to risk touching them at all.

It was only after the expulsion of the Wohlforth group that its viable potential had an opportunity to develop.

Myself in Brief

Where was I during this? It is time to bring my own relationship to Tim Wohlforth into focus.

My own self-conscious personal political history begins in January 1942. Five years intensive study of Hobbes, Rousseau, Berkeley, Hume, Kant, et. al., culminated one January, 1942 night in the reading of the first eight chapters of Capital. This intellectual transformation matured through a number of subsequent developments important to no one but myself until my experiences in Assam and Bengal (India) immediately following the end of the war, when I began recruiting GI's to accompany me in seeking out and joining the nearest Communist Party.

My association with the Communist Party of India, as intense as it was brief, began a mere week before the outbreak of the Bengal Revolution of 1946. Millions of Bengali had defeated the British police and army by sheer mass of Bengalis and the political "leftism" then rampant through British army ranks. These millions were milling through Calcutta in the most massive concentrated display of seemingly spontaneous revolution in human history. All that was needed was for the first party with some standing in this mass to give the "demonstration" a further practical task, a direction: "We are the government of India! Let us begin to govern!" No one, including the Communist Party, moved. Like today's disgusting "lefts" leading march, march, march, the millions of the revolution had dispersed out of sheer exhaustion and lack of leadership. (It was the betrayal of the Bengal Revolution of 1946 by the Communist Party -- among other parties whose contemptible qualities are never in dispute -- that made the communal mass bloodletting of the following period possible.) P.C. Joshi, field leader of the CPI, explained the treachery to me: The CPI was honoring Stalin's agreement with Churchill. I went down the stairs from CPI headquarters, already a Trotskyist by the time I reached the street.

I did not join the SWP on my return to the U.S. later that year. I was poorly impressed by the Militant and by the mediocrity of world outlook of SWP'ers to whom I have talked. They were good, sincere people, but saw politics in "small change" terms. After a few exploratory contacts, I confined myself to campus radicalism until almost the last post-war leftist had "sold out," when I joined the SWP in the Winter of 1948-49. Poor as the SWP was, there was no other place for an honest revolutionary to go.

Later, in the Twin Cities, I met members of the SWP who had played a leading role in the political mass strikes of the 1933-37 period. These were real American revolutionaries, a distillation of the raw revolutionary traditions of the labor movement going back to the Knights of Labor through unbroken connections through the Communist Party, I.W.W. The Communist and Socialist Workers parties in the U.S. had a good number of cadres of the same breed as Karl Skoglund and Ray (V.R.) Dunne, cadres of the potential to organize a socialist



transformation, provided those cadres had been developed through a confrontation with Marx's dialectical method, had been made self-conscious of the class-for-itself method -- and thus insulated against the decay into trade-union "left" opportunism into which all the otherwise best socialist cadres in the U.S. fell in the late 1930's. Dunne, for example, repeatedly professed to me not to understand Marx's economics -- a preposterous attitude for a man who had educated himself in so many ways, a man of Dunne's extraordinary mental-conceptual powers!

Apart from my feelings of comradeship for those who held on to the semblance of Marxist continuity during the McCarthyite period -- a comradeship which is not diminished in that respect by time or separation -- my seventeen-year passage through the SWP was never a political honeymoon, but an expediency for which there was no alternative. Soon enough after my joining, I was enraged by the leaderships' opportunistic ("protective tactical coloration") policy of "critically" supporting Walter Reuther in 1949 during Reuther's pro-McCarthyite campaign to destroy the Communist Party influenced United Electrical Workers Unions; later, I came to understand the strong strain of Schachtmanite Stalino-phobia in all of the SWP's trade-union policies from 1938 on. While I was in formal agreement with Cannon et. al. against Cochran and Clarke (but not with Dave Stevens' idiotic war-cry -- "The Communist Party is Counterrevolutionary Through-and-Through."), and against Pablo's idiocies in the 1953-54 period, I discovered soon enough that Cannon and the rest of the majority leadership were a collection of political frauds. What concerned Cannon in 1953-54 provided the basis for the block between Cannon and Dobbs (who was politically inclined to agree with (Cochran): the organizational "gate-receipts" issue posed by Cochran and Clarkes' liquidationist orientation. Cannon was not wrong in opposing liquidationism even on organizational grounds; what was corrupt in the 1953-54 fights was the attempt of the majority leadership to disguise the fight as a principled political fight on other than organizational grounds (which Healy has never understood). Cannon raised a political smokescreen around this organizational battle, a self-consoling bombast about conjunctural perspectives, when neither Cannon nor any other leader of the majority had the slightest faith in when or where the next period of radical ferment was coming from -- if ever. They were still revolutionaries, of course, but only in the Micawber tradition: "If we keep the faith, God will provide."

After digesting the 1954 experience, I ceased to regard any SWP member as a qualified revolutionary leader, and viewed them as rather a custodial staff keeping premises warmed and aired out for the arrival of actual revolutionary leaders. A real revolutionary leadership would have to be developed. (Not to suggest that I had played even a minor leading role (from Boston) in the 1953-54 factional struggles centering in New York and points west, except for one long letter denouncing a Harry Braverman article on the 1953 East German political strikes.)

The 1953-54 factional struggles in the SWP and "Fourth International" were a small caricature of the Second International's 1899-... "revisionism" struggle. In 1899, Bernstein and Vollmar (the so-called "revisionists") provided a literary pretext for the efforts of the socialist trade-union fractions to liquidate the socialist political movement (except as a mere appendage of trade-union fractions). In the SWP of 1953, there erupted finally the long-standing tendency of the "Detroit" trade-union fraction, under the leadership of "Legien" Bert Cochran, to destroy the political hegemony of the SWP's politics over trade-union work, for which George Clarke and others provided Legien-Cochran et al. with a Bernstein-like "revisionist" rationale. Relecting the same social conditions in Europe, adventurer Pablo and his muddleheaded bookish stooge, Mandel, expressed the same tendency. In this situation, Cannon played the role of a small August Bebel -- without a Rosa Luxemburg or even a Kautsky to give the organizational struggle real political content even in approximation. Cannon's politics were essentially self-consoling rhetoric, and had almost nothing to do with the motions of the hands and feet of the majority leadership in day-to-day practice. The only difference was that the majority wished to maintain a functioning political organization. In that sense, Cannon had the right organizational conception without the political content to make the conception meaningful.

The important point to be emphasized is this. There is, in the organized socialist movement, the prevailing myth that principled factional differences are limited to matters of formal political "positions" and exclude such non-political matters as day-to-day behavior, bureaucratic swindles, etc. The obvious fallacy of this myth is that abstract political positions have real meaning only to the extent that the abstract position corresponds to the details of daily practice. The practice of the myth is that every factioneer, operating on the hope that his credulous followers and opponents alike will play the game by those silly rules of formalism, says in print and public debate that with which he wishes to conceal his actual practice and is highly indignant about bringing it down to "personalities," etc., if any rude observer or opponent should compare the rhetoric with the daily practice. What the SWP leadership, the SLL leadership, Tim Wohlforth, Gus Hall, Milt Rosen, et al. call "principled political discussion" is a mere charade popularized to make political fools of any persons credulous enough to play poker with the other fellow's stacked deck of cards.

### In Parenthesis

It is significant, since the Bulletin is a Schachtmanite cult, to emphasize that all Schachtmanite factions carry this phrasemongering fraud to the extreme. Robertson provides us with the most notorious example of such Talmudism, a mental disorder he contracted from ill-advised associations with Schachtman and Draper.

One must almost dupe a Schachtmanite into supporting a serious socialist campaign effort. He is capable of wilfully acting in sup-

port of nothing more serious than brief ritual displays of serious socialist intentions -- demonstrations for a good revolutionary cause, etc. His day-to-day practice is otherwise limited to things more agreeable to his temperament: outrageous opportunism or sectarian tantrums of abstention from all work (a heritage, as we know, which the International Socialist group has to confront and correct). While his hands and feet are thus moving in the most outrageously opportunist or sterile directions, the Schachtmanite presents himself in the literary domain as the most meticulous revolutionary. He has a catalogue of canonical "positions," to which he can turn as an ever-ready source of excuses not to involve himself in a serious campaign in class interests. (To support such and such would contaminate the purity of the Schachtmanite's Heavenly record.) Consider the way in which the Bulletin, Spartacists and I.S. have consistently managed to worm their way out of contributing any serious effort to work on the housing, transit, open admissions and related class-interest questions in New York City. In each case, these Schachtmanites have always found some minute technical flaw in the wording of, say, a Labor Committee draft; with a shudder, they point with horror to some word omitted or the criminal blunder of moving a modifier before the noun rather than behind it, and thus either abstain or even denounce the work being done! No such scrupulousness seems to develop once the opportunistic abstractions of Mayer Lindsay's work-stoppage appear!

"Orthodox position" politics is nothing but a mental, moral disease! Real politics is a concrete question.

#### After 1954

After the recovery of the U.S. economy from the post-Korea recession, and the passing of McCarthy's days, the SWP turned into a politically-inert sanatorium for semi-retired socialists, a period to which modern SWP'ers refer as the "dog days." I spent the period with my energies divided between daytimes of management consulting and (whenever possible) nighttime and weekends of theoretical political work, especially pertaining to an analysis of the post-war developments of the U.S. economy. My active connection with the SWP was limited to occasional meetings with members of the Weiss circle and instructions to my (former) wife to attend to dues and pledges payments.

During the period from March, 1957 through February, 1958, I repeatedly presented in a variety of media and on a variety of occasions the first (economic) part of the strategic perspective with which my name has been uniquely associated in the socialist movement since that time: March, 1957:

1. That the U.S. was on the verge of a major recession which represented a turning-point in post-war domestic economic development.
2. That this would not lead to an immediate U.S. depression,

because (A) of the reduction of the entire capitalist sector to economic satrapy status under the rule of the U.S. dollar, (B) the consequent propping of the U.S. domestic economy by European and Japanese investment booms.

3. That European investment booms would begin to run out of steam in about six to seven years (two to three recession cycles), after which there would be by the mid-1960's the process leading directly toward a new general world monetary crisis.

Later, in the same period, during the concluding (Winter, 1958) discussions of the so-called "Cowleyite" factional struggle, I presented to the summary discussion in New York the second portion of the U.S. perspective for the 1960's.

4. That the demoralizing pointlessness of the preceding factional discussions with the Cowleyites reflected the fact that both factions (Cowleyites and party leadership) were both totally disoriented. The SWP had been caught in the first upsweep in a new period of radicalism without the slightest conception by either faction of the reasons or course of further development involved. The failure of either faction to respond to my analysis of the situation represented a most dangerous state of affairs, in which, it seemed, the SWP generally had lost the ability to comprehend the actual developments of the historical process.
5. That administrative cost-reduction programs already underway would mean a reduced rate of stockpiling of college graduates by corporations, and lowered rates of investment in expansion of job-creating productive capacity. This meant throwing increasing numbers of youth generally and oppressed minority layers onto the social scrapheap, which would provide the objective basis for increasing radical ferment in these strata. There would not be any significant trade-union political ferment until either the mid-1960's or until, short of that, the ruling class seriously attempted to break the established rights of trade-unions.
6. That the task of socialist organizations during the post-1957 period until conditions for labor upsurge occurred was to concentrate on developing revolutionary cadres from the ranks of youth and oppressed minorities, on the basis of the conjunctural perspective I had previously stated.

Copies of the memorandum I prepared on these theses were incidentally sent to the Central Committee of the British Healyite organization by representatives of the SWP Political Committee, where, after opposition to conjunctural perspectives were registered by Tom Kemp and others there the SLL developed a bowdlerized version of my position for itself.

In the Political Committee of the SWP itself, there was the following division of opinion on my theses and on the advisability of permitting a national discussion of the theses. Tom Kerry, while not convinced that I was correct, took the view that some examination of the obvious new developments was needed and suggested that my theses might be used as a way of provoking thought in those directions. Murry Weiss disagreed entirely with the theses and with the method he regarded them as representing, but was in favor of the discussion as a means of enriching the internal intellectual life of the organization. Morris Stein was opposed to the theses on the principle that Cannon's post-war "American Theses" had been a political blunder, but was willing to have a cautiously-managed airing of the theses. Joseph Hansen offered bitter opposition to both the theses and the prospect of their discussion -- his strong opposition was sufficient to cow a Political Committee which was only marginally sympathetic to the discussion at most.

From that time until my formal separation from the SWP, I was permitted to make only four public statements in behalf of my views. Once in the Militant (despite Hansen's vetoes) on the steel strike, because labor was at that instant in Tom Kerry's bailiwick. Once, the first of three, in the International Socialist Review ("Depression Ahead"), because of sharp divisions in the SWP leadership over other issues. Twice in seven years, I was offered public forums, once on the economic situation and once on Eric Fromm's views of Marx. Three of my documents were suppressed (contrary to rules and procedures), I was forbidden to give classes to any party youth, etc

Why not build a faction and fight? The SWP was too rotten by that time for factional struggles. Everyone was involved in clique struggles over posts with an overlarding of self-consoling rhetoric to deceive the credulous. Any political issues would have divided existing cliques, except those political issues which developed from the social composition of the various cliques

The Seattle clique or "Kirk faction" is a concentrated clinical expression of the SWP's sicknesses during the 1960's. Seattle was technically a faction on two grounds. Mainly because of organizational gripes, many legitimate. Later, because of its support of a Kirk position on the Black question. Going beyond these nominal bases for factional homogeneity, the Seattle group was an improvised pudding of irreconcilable political positions -- a faction that could be held together only by the need to keep the SWP national office from putting the organization into receivership. Once the faction was out of the SWP, it fell apart along more or less natural lines of cleavage.

The only perspective for me after 1958 was to get out -- but to where? It was a matter of enduring the situation until something developed sufficiently in the process of new radicalization that a mere handful of individuals could begin to develop a new organization from "scratch." After 1961, the situation within the SWP was totally impossible. A national leader since 1928, Morris Stein, simply walked out of a National Committee meeting and never returned. Farrell Dobbs left New York on tour. Tom Kerry disappeared to other work for the organization. Murray Weiss, the chief victim of the 1961 convention, was left to manage the shop for a while! The national leadership would have to recover from the effects of the 1961 cliquist orgy before the scar tissue could grow over damaged moral senses and they could progress to new crimes. It was not until late in 1962 that they began to pull themselves together for this nasty purpose, and go on to expel one-quarter of the membership in the Great Purge of 1963-65. During the 1961-63 period, sick to my stomach with the whole crew, I occupied myself with several ambitious computer-complex installations, waiting for the opportunity to begin leaving the organization.

#### "The Fourth International"

It was during the same period, 1961 through 1963, that the so-called "Fourth International," which had split into two irreconcilable factions in 1953-54, went through what was called a "reunification," as a result of which the "Fourth International" split into four absolutely-irreconcilable factions, each claiming to have run off with the one and only franchise. That is the context in which the present-day Bulletin has developed, as a miserable pawn whose entire present existence is that of waiting for the gambit in which Healy will totally discard it.

The "reunification" was a scheme developed by Murray Weiss in response to Cuba's self-designation as a socialist state. Proceeding from the judgment that Cuba's socialist transformation vindicated Trotsky's "Theory of Permanent Revolution" (which was true), and from the fact that both the Pablo-Mandel and SWP factions viewed Cuban developments in these happy terms, Weiss conceived of the grandiose scheme in which he foresaw a reunification of the two "Fourth Internationals" as the lever through which to draw Castro into the same new communist international Weiss saw being formed. Exploratory negotiations were conducted through a courier; when expressions of pronounced interest had been received from Mandel, Weiss pushed the project further with James P. Cannon. Between them, Cannon and Weiss tactfully maneuvered Dobbs into endorsement of the project, arranged an amiable meeting between Dobbs and Mandel, and the project was on. (Later, after he had resigned from the SWP leadership, Weiss reminisced on the failure of his scheme: "Wholesalers don't talk to retailers.")



Healy and his French co-thinkers objected. The real main reasons for their objections were organizational. Healy had come close to losing his English organization to Pablo on one occasion; the French group had once been unceremoniously tossed out of the organization in which they were a majority by Pablo. Neither Healy nor his French collaborators wished to risk their resources and peace of mind in the same organization with Pablo again. As for Pablo's stooge, Mandel, they all had just contempt. Political rationalizations for these objections were, of course, soon presented for the amusement of the credulous. Healy "politicized" his objections by developing an absurd counter-position on Cuba -- so silly that the Wohlforthites in the U.S.A. instantly regarded Healy's Cuba position as their own! Out of this low comedy "agreement" a common "international faction" was born, between the starry-eyed Wohlforthites and their tongue-in-cheek master, Healy.

Admittedly, there were important organic political differences developing between the SWP and Healy's SLL. After Hungary, Healy had won over a large chunk of the British Communist Party in the train of Peter Fryer, abruptly transforming Healy's tiny group into a "big business" status within the British radical movement. In a characteristically centrist way, the British left has a much more significant continuity within the working class than has been the case in the U.S., and Britain's satrapy status accelerated political class struggle conditions in Britain earlier and more rapidly than they developed in the U.S. The tactical realities confronting Healy were qualitatively different than those confronting the SWP in the U.S. What was opportunistically good for U.S. SWP bureaucrats was not the opportunist good for the bureaucracy of the SLL. The SWP wished to play down the importance of the working class struggle in the advanced sector in favor of building a U.S. cheering-section for struggles in colonial countries; Healy's SLL could not have stayed in going business six months with that sort of rubbish -- Healy was orienting toward the working-class youth ferment in Britain, super-exploited apprentices, etc. In developing a political smokescreen for organizational issues, Healy inevitably reflected the growing organic differences in outlook between the SLL and SWP, and these smokescreen issues ultimately took on a life of their own. Class perspective differences became the legitimate main differences between the SWP and SLL. The fact that Healy had institutionalized that silly Cuba position of his compelled the SLL to defend it and the SLL and SWP to debate it from here to the Greek Kalends. The main issue remained the SWP's affiliation to that renegade wretch, Mandel.

On the SWP's side, fake political issues were similarly developed and institutionalized to assume a life of their own. The SWP had to show that it was one-up on Healy's SLL; therefore, since the SWP had no immediate prospect of class-struggle work, it was necessary to "show" that Healy's successes in Britain were of no importance and that the work being done by the SWP and Mandel was of the higher order of revolutionary relevance, etc. To accomplish this, Joseph Hansen developed the outrageous nonsense that Cuba had proved that there

had been created a "Cuban Model" of revolutions in semi-colonial countries which obviated the further need for revolutionary-cadre parties. By 1963, Weiss, coming to agree with that general outlook, did the obvious thing: he resigned from the SWP leadership as the consistent action following from his agreement that it was a mistake to maintain revolutionary-vanguard parties of the SWP type in the present historic period. If Dobbs, Kerry, et al. actually agreed with Hansen, why didn't they dissolve the SWP?

The point merits emphasis. Tailing pro-Cuban sentiment in the U.S. and elsewhere was in the immediate business interests of the SWP leadership. Hansen's "theory" was not intended by the SWP leadership as a "theory" in the literal sense, but as an effective bit of obfuscation, a "political position" for the edification of those credulous enough to take the SWP's pretensions to "theory" seriously. Hansen himself is not given to publicly unburdening his inner self, so it would be unwarranted to speculate on whether or not he himself ever took his "theory" seriously. We can be certain from SWP practice that they never regarded the "Cuban Model" as anything more than a "sales gimmick," not a product to be consumed by the SWP itself.

It is of course, not absolutely essential that a vanguard party exist in order for a socialist revolution to occur. No one of any importance in the revolutionary movement has ever denied that. The countries of Eastern Europe, China, Cuba, North Vietnam, are unquestionably workers' economies, absolutely not to be confused with bonapartist "nationalist" regimes such as Algeria, Egypt, or the Baathist chimeras -- which are absolutely a form of semi-colonial capitalist regimes of the exact political form the U.S. is trying to create in Latin America (for example) today. Cuba is, undeniably, an instance in which a socialist revolution has occurred without a revolutionary vanguard party in the leadership. That is not the point of any legitimate issue. The issue is that such developments in semi-colonial countries occur as occasionally-inevitable flukes; the issue is that the effort to adduce from such flukes a "new model" for socialist revolutions is a criminal occupation, as we have seen from the suicidal butchering of so many potential cadres who foolishly attempted to imitate the "Cuban way" in Latin America. Healy, in particular, knows all this very well, which poses the issue: Why didn't he simply state the issue as it actually is, instead of resorting to that equally-criminal occupation of denying the socialist transformation of Cuba?

It is a commonplace and stupid practice in socialist organizations (but hardly peculiar to socialist organizations) to resort to the arsenal of Tammany politics to exaggerate one's opponents' activities and political statements to the point which goes well beyond so modest a fault as lying. In order to make his point against his pro-Cuban-Model opponents, Healy criminally slandered Castro et al. by likening Cuba to Algeria, Egypt, etc. Then, having



equated Cuba with Egypt, Healy damns Cuba as a capitalist state by citing the capitalist features of a bonapartist regime like Nasser's! When Castro, whose socialist qualities hardly recommend him as an expert on socialism, also committed the public blunder of likening Cuba to Algeria, etc., Healy, instead of analyzing and correcting Castro's actual mistake, grinned at the factional mileage he could extract from this nonsense. In sum, Healy put the petty shopkeeping interests of the SLL leadership above and in opposition to the interests of developing clear theoretical understanding of potential revolutionary cadres. In order to pursue a vulgar organizational interest of his faction, Healy permits himself to muddle and destroy the revolutionary potential of his own cadres!

It need not be explained in detail why Healy gained no factional support from any of the regular cadres of the SWP. I was the only person in the SWP consciously concerned with the real political issues involved; the rest were mainly occupied with cliquist struggles for leadership posts, and all keenly sensible of the advantages of playing up to the most simplistic emotional appeal of Cuba among new radicals outside the SWP in the U.S.A.! In the U.S., only the Schachtmanites in and out of the SWP, among self-styled Marxists, raised any doubts that Cuba had become some sort of workers' economy; for factional maneuvers here, Healy was compelled to turn to the Wohlforthites, which he picked up very cheap at option.

#### The "Great 1963-1965 Purge" Begins

In 1963, the reunification between the pro-SWP and Pablo-Mandel forces occurred -- without Healy and his French co-thinkers. Healy responded to the unification by declaring that he and the French group were the one and only properly-franchised "Fourth International". This immediately placed the Wohlforthites in the SWP in the position of being an organizational affiliate of an "enemy organization." The SWP leadership licked its lips and reached for the axe: expel them at once and then let the on-going purge begin.

Wohlforth, on Healy's instructions, postponed his expulsion by publicly fingering the Robertson group. The faction acting on the discipline of the "enemy" organization succeeded in prompting the expulsion of a group without outside ties as the "disloyal" faction. Since the Robertson group was less discredited in the organization and growing somewhat, the SWP leadership eagerly seized upon the stool-pigeon testimony to expel the leaders of the Robertson faction in the Winter of 1963. Then, when the Robertson leadership made a public statement on their expulsion, the SWP began expelling all remaining Robertsonite members who did not repudiate the expelled group! In June of the same year, Wohlforth, fed up with Healy's assignment to him to remain in the SWP, easily arranged his group's expulsion.

Wohlforth's expulsion ended, to all practical intents, the "Fourth International" question within the SWP.

#### My Association with Wohlforth

Tossed out of the SWP, the Wohlforth group (seven active members) temporarily lost its market value for Healy, and thus gave up the life of organizational crimes the British Fagin demanded of it. Instead of going out of political life, Wohlforth turned to his one skill, publicist, to organize a biweekly mimeographed Bulletin, and assigned the two other leading male members (Fred M. and Dan Fried) to apply for membership in PLP.

The first issue of the Bulletin, distributed particularly to all known SWP oppositionists, included a supplement setting forth a fair vulgarization of the economic aspect of my 1958 theses. In response to this, Carol and I contacted Fred Mueller and began discussions with the Wohlforth group.

Discussions continued without more than one violation of my technical SWP membership proprieties until February. (The exception occurred when Tim asked me to edit a folder of draft notes and reference materials which Dan Fried had been attempting to work up as a Bulletin article on the economic situation.) The change came immediately after the Winter, 1965 National Committee meeting of the SWP and that meeting's announcement of the forthcoming general purge of all minorities. Three incidents were of leading importance for me.

First, through Carol's immediate involvement in the impending SSEU strike, I became involved in what I immediately recognized as a potential disaster without some immediate assistance to that union. With Steve Z., Carol and I got to work, contacting our acquaintance, Judy Mage, then Vice President of the union. She confirmed our concern about the lack of clear direction for the strike ahead and expressed her willingness to receive any advice and assistance we might be able to produce. Carol and I developed a set of proposals which we reviewed with Steve and then with the national leadership of the SWP. (over the head of the cretin-like local leadership). Judy Mage agreed with the proposals we submitted, of which the political kernel was that of focussing on the commonality of interests of welfare workers and ghetto victims, to prevent the city from driving a racial-strife wedge between the SSEU and ghetto and to provide the political programmatic basis for creating an organization of student radicals and other trade-union rank-and-file groups to build strength outside the SSEU itself. To the extent that Judy Mage could cope with problems represented by the president, Tepedino, and other more conservative layers, and with support from pro-civil rights strata among young case-workers, she pushed that line of collaboration and played a most positive role in making the SSEU's programmatic outlook toward the black ghetto the best in the nation.

This program was documented and submitted in written and oral form to an SWP fraction of persons (mainly) involved in various areas of public employee and ghetto work without a single objection raised. Carol, Steve and I undertook a significant part of the political organization work, key SWP-YSA youth were assigned to collaborate closely with Judy Mage, etc., etc. Then, the cretin-faction in the NY Local secured support from its allies higher in the organization and the entire program was bureaucratically suppressed barely an hour before the first meeting of the support group! The pretexts for this were a set of explicitly centrist statements of "principles" about trade-union work: fractions should be limited to persons immediately employed in that shop or union, etc., etc.

The second incident, the SWP executive refused to submit to the Winter National Committee meeting a document properly submitted to that proceeding. The excuse submitted was that the National Committee could not consider a change in "line." In any case, the National Committee duly passed an 180-degree change in line in another matter.

Thirdly, in an almost illiterate document, clanking with Lassalleian "iron," the National committee passed a resolution which did two things: gave ex post facto "legality" to the previous several illegal expulsions, and provided the list of crimes for which (actually) any member of the SWP could have been instantly expelled by a majority vote of the three-man "Secretariat" "Death sentences" could be summarily imposed for such offenses as discussing politics with another party member in one's home. The themes were "Order, Family, Law, Obedience,..." Sensible of the notoriety such resolution deserved, the SWP leadership offered the victims the consolation: After all, the SWP is a voluntary organization, so if you don't like our rules, you can always quit -- a bit of moralizing obviously borrowed from the Pinkerton archives: If you don't like the management policy, quit.

At this juncture, only a fool would consider "fighting to remain in the SWP." Unfortunately, there were mostly fools among the victims marked for the block. When I promptly published an advertisement of the "secret" purge resolution in the Bulletin, virtually every oppositionist charged me with making unconscionable slanders against the SWP leadership -- a charge they continued to make against me up to almost the day they were expelled. (Ironically, I was the last of the oppositionists, together with Carol, to be ushered out!)

From that point, I began collaborating closely with the Bulletin making my collaboration known to every oppositionist within the SWP. This collaboration continued up to April, 1966. I was set on building a new cadre organization and the Bulletin, for all its defects, was the only grouping in sight worth my effort to make something of it. From February to about October, the membership of the Bulletin grouping grew to about thirty members, and later rose to about forty. Carol's and my own participation and the political direction we introduced were the decisive factors in giving the tiny nucleus life.

From then, February, until at least mid-August, 1965, there was no question of my hegemony in the group on political questions. Tim and others, from May on, were beginning to assimilate the class-for-itself conception and to develop rudiments of understanding of Marx's sociological method. Given another six months without interference from Britain, it would have been most difficult for Healy to have destroyed the people as he did.

Healy's interventions, beginning in August of that year, co-incided with another development of absolutely trivial importance, but which nonetheless demoralized Wohlforth for the time being, setting him back in organizational morality and political development almost a full year.

As a result of the assignment of Dan Fried to the Lower East Side PLP club, the Bulletin had recruited two PLP members (Jeff S. and his wife) and half-recruited George Stryker and Stryker's closest personal collaborators. When Dan Fried and Fred Mueller were chased out of PLP during the Trotskyite purge launched by madman Milton Rosen, early in 1965, it was decided to keep Jeff and his wife in PLP as undercover members, presumably for the purpose of collaborating with Stryker directly and attempting to further infiltrate the dissident Lindner caucus. It was a dismal life for Jeff S., who was being increasingly "Trotskyite-baited" by the lower orders of PLP life in his PL Club. One day, "accidentally," as Freud would say, Jeff left documentary evidence of his double-membership at a PL member's house. It's the most common sort of "accident" in the socialist movement (in particular); try to keep a member assigned to a trade union by decree -- he won't violate "party orders," but he can get himself "accidentally" fired in a number of ways -- if nothing else works, he'll provoke a wildcat. The resignation of Jeff S. from PLP and Stryker's paranoid tantrum to Tim afterwards demoralized Tim, who obviously had idiotic dreams about the PL caper, and was upset at having to report the loss of this "business interest" to Healy.

The point is far more than anecdotal. The most deadly source of demoralization and political aberrations in the socialist movement for, especially, youth recruits is the opportunistic orientation to "success." Instead of approaching the ebbs and flows in the process to understand what, with one's concrete resources and situation, one must do, the opportunistically-inclined activist approaches the movement more or less from the standpoint of his personal ambitions, and looks for "gimmicks" to ensure him the sort of quick successes he desires.

This sort of opportunism is associated, symptomatically, with a disdain for serious theory. The opportunist regards other members and sympathizers as organizational cannon-fodder, as potential hand-raisers, seat-fillers, dues-payers and "Jimmy Higgins" workers, but not as theoretically-developed cadre-potential. He is concerned with "what will work," etc. In the upswing such persons with opportunist tendencies may seem to be extremely interested in serious theoretical work; actually, they are interested in the usefulness of certain kinds of theoreticians for developing tactical approaches which work. They

may sometimes seem the strongest supporters of theoretical conceptions. What they are doing is not actually assimilating the theory, but recognizing in someone else's theoretical development the tactical conception required. They promote the theoretical formulations actually as the tactical formulations they view them as. They see only the specific contingency of the conception, not the process of conception behind the particular application.

This weakness in their character development shows in their reluctance to undertake longer-term campaigns in which there is not a specific short-term tactical success virtually guaranteed. In the Labor Committees' internal experience, the worst problem we have had of this sort is Paul Rockwell. Paul, who is bright but lacking originality, a retailer of other people's ideas, and bright enough as a "quick study" of books and articles whose themes he wishes to propagate under the aegis of his own ego, was powerfully attracted to the Labor Committees for a while because of our brilliance and because of our tactical insights. Constantly he was a problem for us, as at every turn he produced some new "get rich quick" idea -- we would have a 100,000 daily newspaper within a week or something of that sort. Paul had the talent not of a Marat, but a Danton -- a romantic sausage-skin which needed regular restuffing.

I am acutely conscious of this problem in my wake. My commitments, temperament and creative abilities seem to generate a certain amount of "charisma" under conditions in which radical ferment is on the upswing, and in which rapidly changing circumstances give me an advantage over more classical tacticians in the realm of tactical maneuvering. Under "go-go" conditions, my training and disposition enable me to swing a fair number of young people, and to generate rapid theoretical development in them to a certain depth. This was the case with the Bulletin group during the February-August, 1965, period. Then, when the tactical situation ebbs, the problems still unsolved begin to surge. One sees then how much of the theoretical agreement was contingent, tactical, and how much was accomplished on the higher level of process-conceptions. It must also be taken into account in the case of the Bulletin that Tim, who is decidedly not a theoretician but merely a person of respectable intelligence potential, stood way above any other of the members Carol and I worked with, and that, thus, we may see that the average quality of the Bulletin cadres was decidedly inferior to those of the average Labor Committee cadres today. Still, in 1965, they were the best human potential in sight, and that is not an unimportant quality.

Two developments made the Bulletin suddenly important to Healy again. That is where the Bulletin's troubles really began. Firstly, the rapid growth and other clear indications of the group's ability to survive. Secondly, the negotiations with Spartacist, which Tim had initiated at my prompting. With a significant part of the Spartacists's 70 members (1965) and the Bulletin's then rapid rate of growth, Healy justly saw the potential for an organization of several hundreds within a year or so. I was Healy's main problem. Without me, the growth would not occur except at a snail's pace; with me, Healy knew

he could not control the group as he had within the SWP.

Healy never intended to fight to get me out of the group. That is not the way most Communist and Trotskyist groups work! The Comintern method -- also Healy's method -- is to isolate and publicly degrade dangerous individuals, and once they are isolated and broken, assimilate them into one's machine as useful party hacks. (Anyone who takes seriously the Sunday-Supplement trash about Soviet "brainwashing" simply knows nothing about the real internal practices of organizations which have traditions traceable to the Comintern. Any experienced leader in the socialist movement knows exactly how "brainwashing" is accomplished.) Needless to say, Healy was dealing with a person who knew all about that game; it didn't work out as he planned.

He took two steps which were a tip-off of his intentions prior to the October, 1965 meeting in Montreal. First, he demanded that I not resign from the SWP after the Sept., 1965 Convention -- as had been previously agreed and understood. The obvious implication to anyone who knows the movement: As long as I was stuck with maintaining nominal SWP membership, I could not function openly in the Bulletin, which would prevent me from building a public and internal following. (It's like assigning a Soviet official to an obscure foreign embassy or a Siberian sugar-beet factory or something of that sort.) Then, the Central Committee of the SLL published a statement denouncing my political line in the weekly Newsletter.

Needless to say, I arrived in Montreal prepared to make clear to that gentleman exactly what I would and would not tolerate from him.

### Why Bother?

It might be asked, considering the way in which the Bulletin hardcore (the Not-So-Magnificent-Seven) went back to the old dirty tricks the following April (1966): "Since they had been so rotten before and turned out to be as rotten again, weren't you mistaken to bother?"

It is too easy, considering the disgusting state of affairs, the corrupt behavior of most individuals and groups within the movement, to arrive at judgments which view these problems entirely out of context. (After all, in reviewing the organization crimes of the SWP, etc., we have barely scratched the depths of depravity commonplace within PLP, the CP, etc.) What makes these problems within the movement so obviously hideous is the higher standard of comradeship which socialist organization ought to exemplify. What makes the expression of such personal weakness so vicious, however, is the pressure of the pariahdom of capitalist society for the member of socialist organizations. It is a common mistake by tired socialists, that they foolishly imagine that personal life outside the bitter organizational strife within the movement is somehow free of the special sickness of "little sects." Not so.



Nothing is more vicious than ordinary family life -- which has been the principal training-ground for the nastiness which individuals bring into the socialist movement. The worst features of socialist bureaucracies are only imitations of what is universal to every capitalist organization. What makes this corruption so specially vicious in socialist organizations is the juxtaposition of the everyday filth of capitalist social life to the goal of socialism. The fact remains: the worst abuses within the socialist movement are reflections of diseases imported by individuals insufficiently disinfested in their migrations from the ranks of capitalist society's believers. Anti-intellectualism -- the side of Stalin that made him a counterrevolutionary was not his affiliation to the Bolsheviks, but rather the fact that throughout all his life he remained essentially a small-town petit-bourgeois roisterer, an anti-intellectual boor, a "practical" man. Cliquism: the ordinary pussy secretion of family life in capitalist society. Opportunism: the essence of capitalist society's practice for all classes.

Admittedly, there is a certain kind of old-socialist rottenness of people within the movement which ultimately does make old socialists less viable than fresh recruits. Once one has taken one's commitment to socialism too often into the realm of organizational corruption, cliquism, unprincipled factionalism, etc., one loses the moral ability to distinguish between socialist practice and the ordinary business of petty shopkeepers' knavery. Such morally-senile socialists may still be able to contribute to the movement, provided they are given the moral equivalent of "seeing-eye dogs," kept on a firm moral leash by a strong socialist leadership.

I did not break with the group in October, as I absolutely intended after the first two conference sessions. It was plain that Healy had certain socialist talents, insights, etc., but within a badly-warped moral sense. It was also plain that most of my associates at the conference turned into moral zombies in Healy's presence. I was immediately convinced to cut my losses and apply my efforts to potential socialists to be found elsewhere outside both the SWP and Healy's spheres of influence. I did not, partly because of Carol's urging, partly because of the urgings of three former Twin Cities SWP comrades who had joined the group recently, largely -- they had stated publicly -- on account of my analysis of the SWP's degeneration published in the Bulletin. I consented to their pleas because Healy and I did agree on the question immediately posed by the Montreal conference. Nor was it one of your ordinary self-consoling rhetorical agreements; it was an agreement on the details of practice, a perspective based on the documents I had just written in the SWP internal discussion.

Presently (1965), the Montreal concordat decided, the only possibility for building a cadre organization in the U.S.A. capable of intervening in a coming labor upsurge lies in recruiting cadres from the ranks of today's radical youth. The attempt to fuse with the Spartacist organization, provided they accept the conjunctural perspective adopted by the International Committee, will enable us to intervene

effectively in the ranks of radical youth.

I was to draft the theses for the fusion process, and reluctantly conceded to stay in the SWP as a way of avoiding the otherwise immediate split with Healy -- mainly because I did not think the SWP leadership was quite as stupid as it proved to be, and expected to be tossed out immediately, no matter what decision I made.

### Healy's Psychotic Episode

For reasons which have never been adequately explained, at the London conference of April, 1966, of the International Committee (Healy's international philately group) Healy suddenly publicly repudiated every agreement he had made with me or anyone else during the preceding six months period, turning his back completely on the political line he had been pushing in the Fall of 1965 (in several countries, as well as the U.S.A.), and dumping his own politics in favor of the most idiotic declaration of sectarianism imaginable. Not discounting the fact that the SLL and its French co-thinkers are too well established as organizations in their respective countries not to be a small factor in socialist politics, the International Committee in April 1966 tossed away all its potential for bringing some new international proto-party into being...in what amounted to a psychotic episode.

Healy, in an atmosphere of physical terror aimed at dissident delegates (hooliganism is scarcely unknown within political meetings of SLL bodies: when words fail, the boys may slug it out, with last man standing winning the vote), declared the unique purity of Healy's apostolic succession as the leader of a "Fourth International" which was, by virtue of such canonical authority, the one and only true international party of the world working class for here and ever after. Anyone who refused to instantly kiss the hem of Healy's garment and declare allegiance to this new doctrine was immediately cast forever into outer darkness as a "revisionist" who had repudiated "internationalism."

After efforts to establish, from New York, that reports on the conference received by telephone were not simply slanderous, I had confirmation of every psychotic detail of the proceeding directly from Healy's own signed letters to me. I immediately discharged my duty of explaining to Healy his general likeness to such creatures as F. Ebert and washed my hands of the political suicide-case called the International Committee. To which Healy responded by likening me to Paul Levi, thus slyly conceding to me that he recognized the April 1966 conference as his "March Action."

### The Bulletin's On-Going Decay

Immediately following the April, 1966, conference, the remaining members of the Bulletin organization proceeded to celebrate the reduction in membership, political competence and moral competence by preparing to leap from the status of a propaganda society into a full-fledged "Leninist Party," the thirty-member Workers-League. In order to purge itself of all connections to me or to the former selves of its principal members, it publicly repudiated most of the political



programmatic standpoints it had represented in the previous eighteen months. It particularly repudiated the Montreal concordat, and denounced everyone as a Pabloite, "revisionist," etc., who proposed to recruit cadres from the student-radical layers. The thirty-member new "party" would make the revolution by going directly to the U.S. working class as the thousands of SLL's and Young Socialist (combined) were doing in respect to the British working class. It especially repudiated the class-for-itself method and outlook, with which it had been associated from February 1965 through April 1966, by insisting that local workers' organization at the point of production was the form in which workers secreted political class consciousness. In sum, the Workers League celebrated the April, 1966 conference by instantly becoming a centrist micro-sect of the most contemptible type -- a band of Peter Schlimihls.

After the Columbia strike and the French general strike of 1968, even the Bulletin could no longer maintain the pretense that radical youth in the U.S. were of no importance. Wohlforth, responding weakly to the article, "The New Left, Local Control and Fascism," as he had in moments of crisis to my previous 1964-65 writings, assigned two of his members to collaborate with the Labor Committees as part of a new turn which plainly involved a Wohlforth perspective of fusion (as he would view it) with Marcus. Shortly, a bundle from Britain was sent to visit Wohlforth, Wohlforth was "straightened out" by this Healyite Papal Legate, and many Labor Committee members witnesses first hand Healy's practice of turning his followers into maniacs. It is a slander that every Bulletin member turns into a gibbering idiot on viewing the Union Jack; it is the sight of Healy's portrait that actually performs this small miracle.

If the Wohlforth group were of any size, its present work would represent first-rate political felonies, ranking it with the CP and SWP. That is to refer to the actual content of the Bulletin's centrist, Schachtmanite "A Labor Party based on the existing unions." What this means in practice is aptly illustrated by the scoundrelly attack the Bulletin made on the SSEU union leadership for including in the union program programmatic demands representing the common class interests of welfare case workers and ghetto victims. It attacked the union leadership for continuing (since the founding days under Mage's Vice-Presidency) class-for-itself demands in the union program: Otherwise, the Bulletin makes it indisputable that its practical position on the "Labor Party" is purely centrist.

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This history of the Wohlforth group, which differs from the history of most socialist groups in the past only as the same infection inevitably differs from individual victim to victim generally, teaches certain important lessons.

The substitution of organizational servility for actual internal theoretical judgmental processes is itself an expression of capitalist ideology, which repeatedly leads to centrist and other forms of political and moral degeneration of groups within the socialist movement. There is absolutely no substitute for a cadre-organization based on members who, in each case, must be developed as rapidly as possible as fully qualified theoreticians, masters of Marx's method and economic theories in particular. Any organization which considers a "Jimmy Higgins" membership tolerable is vulnerable to the same forms of decay we see in the Bulletin.

Opportunism, the viewing of theory merely as a way of deducing tactical gimmicks for success -- of seeing only the particular, contingent aspect of theory -- is the most common form in which individuals in the socialist movement disguise an actually -- superficial grasp of theory, a grasp of theory not accompanied by any correction of the underlying bourgeois ideological (empiricist) method. This superficiality itself proves its nature immediately a sharp turn in the situation, a sudden, unexpected radicalization, or a down-turn in tactical opportunities of the moment, disorients the superficial socialist. He loses confidence in theory because it no longer seems to work in the shallow conception he has of it.

We must therefore view as a source of grave danger in any socialist organization a Kautskyian effort to popularize theory, an effort to make it seem more immediately understandable from the standpoint of ordinary radical mediocrity, to reduce theory to a handful of easily learned recipes, etc.

Wohlforth, ironically, is notorious for his frequent references to the importance of method -- having learned from Healy, Slaughter, and Marcus a few superficial facts about this problem. In Wohlforth's case, this is purely self-consoling rhetoric, since Workers' League members from Wohlforth on down, almost like such notorious ignoramuses and bores as PLP leaders, show that they have never seriously studied Marx's method or assimilated even the rudiments of his economic theories. The Spartacist organization includes, to my knowledge, one person who is acquainted with Marx's Capital - from a Keynesian point of view - and who can spout a few phrases to that effect when the script of his organization calls for such performances, but he, like the rest of his incredibly low-browed organization, knows absolutely nothing about actual Marxian theory.

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