

CONTINUITY AND DISCONTINUITY OF 'LAMBERTISM' --- A CONTRIBUTION
TO THE HISTORY OF A DEGENERATION. By Michel Lequenne

(The following is a rough translation of an article published in the May-June 1976 issue of the Revue de Critique Communiste, theoretical magazine of the Revolutionary Communist League of France, French Section of the Fourth International.)

(This article is discussed in the Statement of the Political Committee of the Socialist Workers Party on the Objections raised to inviting the OCRFI to Observe the 1976 Convention.)

(See pages 11-13, SWP Internal Information Bulletin, No. 9 in 1976).

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The OCI claims to represent the continuity of the Fourth International in France and even internationally. From the organizational standpoint alone, this is a rather strange claim, coming from a formation that has been separated from the bulk of the International for more than twenty years and has managed to break with all those who collectively or successively have shared in its Penelope-like labor of "reconstructing the Fourth International." This claim is all the more peculiar since for ten years the sections and membership of the Fourth International have grown throughout the world, often in countries where Trotskyism has never existed. But then did not Lenin, along with a small handful, represent revolutionary Marxism in the Second International when the overwhelming bulk of this movement was drawn into an irreversible process of degeneration? That is true! But on the basis of just the Bolshevik party, he did not claim to be the Second International and when the time came to rebuild a world movement, he called for building a Third International. If it were true that the Fourth International had degenerated in its turn, then the OCI would have to build a Fifth International, or fight inside the Fourth to correct its course, as Trotsky did in the Third until 1933.

Can the OCI at least offer a line of continuity on the national level? Outside of a group numbering no more than ten persons, no such continuity exists. Among other more or less discreet confessions to which we will return later, the little book the OCI published in May 1970, under the title Les enseignements de notre histoire ("Lessons of Our History"), informs us that in 1952 this organization had no more than fifty members and that "most of the activists recruited in the period 1945-1950" had left. This tiny organization was thus made up essentially of activists who had not gone through the 1952 split. The continuity of the Lambertist organization (which took the name OCI in 1965) is thus represented by "what was called the Lambert group (stressed in the book-- Michel Lequenne), that is the old nucleus of at most a dozen individuals. This could constitute continuity if there were a political continuity; but the latter has to be proved and not just asserted. To test this claim to political continuity, we have to step out of the framework of "Lambertist" mythology, and in order to do that we have to analyze this mythology in its relationship to the practice and to the actual theoretical thinking of this current. This is what I am going to try to do here.

The Reality and the Myth of Pabloism

The Lambertists are supposed to represent the continuity of orthodoxy as against the continuity of revisionism, of "Pabloism."

Down through the years, the charge of "Pabloism" has been directed not only at the entire reunified International. It has been thrown at all opponents of the Lambertist formation, including its allies for the longest time such as the Healy group in England, which broke with the OCI after twenty years of cohabitation. It is even thrown back and forth between the Lambertists and the splinter groups that have spun off from them. All these groups wage violent war on each other, acting out the same phobias. Then the final blow! The charge of "Pabloism" has been turned against the OCI itself by its rebellious pupils.

Thus, from a political characterization, the term "Pabloism" has become a mere epithet that no longer has anything to do with the past or present theories of Michel Pablo, a former leader of the Fourth International who broke with it ten years ago. What the epithet means is "capitulator to Stalinism." Thus it can be used in broadcast fashion by an organization that has become crypto-Social Democrat. However, if we are to understand the history of our movement we have to break with a method that is in fact Stalinist and make characterizations on the basis of precise political content and not slanderous extrapolations.

If Pabloism is supposed to represent Pablo's positions, that dates it as a characterization. In his political evolution, Michel Pablo has arrived at positions today that are virtually the opposite of those that distinguished him in 1951-52. And if this evolution has an underlying logic, that does not justify mixing up the end (for the time being?) with the beginning, since the implications at various stages are different. It is no excuse that the Lambertist "simplifications" are matched by equal and opposite ones just as obfuscationist in the self-justifying writings of Pablo and his current, such as Contribution pour une appréciation critique de l'évolution de la IV^e Internationale et des perspectives organisationnelles de la tendance marxiste-révolutionnaire (Contribution to a Critical Evaluation of the Evolution of the Fourth International and its Perspectives," published in Pablo's organ Sous le drapeau du socialisme in May 1972).¹

¹The following is a typical example of this parallelism:

In order to establish its continuity, Lambertism dreamed up a "working-class" current and a "working-class leadership" that is supposed to have existed prior to 1952 within the majority at the time. We will come back to this question. The present-day Pabloist current does the same thing with even greater exaggeration. It dates its birth from the period immediately following the Second World War. The influence of Stalinist falsification is really all-pervasive. This is reminiscent of the anti-Stalinist caricatures of the early 1950s that showed Napoleon commanding the seizure of the Bastille or Marx writing Capital under a portrait of Stalin.

What, then, was Pabloism in 1951, when a political struggle began in the French section of the International against the new views, which were expressed most prominently in a contribution to the discussion for the Third World Congress entitled: "Where Are We Going?" and which appeared publicly in the February-April 1951 issue of the magazine Quatrieme Internationale under the signature of Michel Pablo? This first key document was not without ambiguity. But reading it in the light of subsequent documents and above all the pamphlet La guerre qui vient ("The Coming War"), which was published after the split in December 1952, you can identify a body of coherent conceptions. And it is just as clear today as it was for a minority of the members of the International at the time these conceptions broke from the previous positions of the Fourth International.

The underlying concept in La guerre qui vient is that a third world war is inevitable in the near future between the USSR, China, and the "people's democracies," which were cautiously, termed "noncapitalist states," and the imperialist states and their bourgeois satellites. Such a war would be an international civil war and Trotskyists would have to defend the camp of the workers states unconditionally and take a position of revolutionary defeatism toward the imperialist side. These consequences would follow automatically for all Trotskyists. The first difference was not on this question, but on the possibility of such a war following from the breach that was opened by the Korean war. Were the economic and military conditions for war on the imperialist side, in particular the development of atomic arms at the time, sufficient to make such a war inevitable? The French majority (later the international minority) did not believe this was the case. They thought in particular that the instability of the European capitalist countries allied to the United States ruled out such a war. I will not stress this point. History has decided the question against the theory of the "coming war," and confirmed the arguments of the then French majority in some detail.

However, such a difference in itself could not have ended in a split if it had not been for the conclusions that M. Pablo drew as to the nature of Stalinism, its development, and the turn that the Fourth International ought to take as a result. For the fundamental Trotskyist distinction between the workers movement and its treacherous leaderships, in particular the Stalinist bureaucracies, Pablo substituted the notion of the "Stalinist world" as a unity, opposed to the "capitalist system." While for Trotsky, defense of the Soviet Union involved an intransigent struggle against the bureaucratic Soviet leadership, Pablo relegated this struggle to a later historical stage. His written formulations remained ambiguous, but his policy had the two faces of Janus. Thus, in attacking unnamed adversaries, who were supposed to be frightened by the danger of the "worldwide expansion of Stalinism," he nonetheless advanced the idea of an "entire historical period of several centuries marked by forms and systems, transitional between capitalism and socialism, that will necessarily be far from 'pure' and far from the norms." To be sure, bureaucracy is not a synonym for Stalinism, but such a statement along with the notion of the "Stalinist world" was totally at variance with Trotsky's conclusions in the articles collected under the title of In Defense of Marxism. In La guerre qui vient, which he wrote after he was freed from the need for the cautious formulations imposed by

the debate with the French majority, Pablo dared to speak of the regime in the USSR as one "preparatory to socialism," and the formal repetition of the character of the bureaucracy as counterrevolutionary was reduced to nothing by the statement that this bureaucracy would be "forced to give a certain revolutionary impulse to the masses it controls or influences" and that this bureaucracy would be involved in a "permanent test of strength" with imperialism.

However, what most disturbed a large part of the Trotskyist movement in a lasting way was that starting from an observation of the victory of the Yugoslav and Chinese revolutions, Pablo drew the abstract generalization that any Stalinist party can undergo a revolutionary regeneration under the whip of sharpening class struggle in the fire of the international civil war. Implicitly this meant denying the need for the proclamation of the Fourth International which for Trotsky flowed precisely from the irreversible degeneration of the Comintern. Was this statement only supposed to apply to the leadership of the Comintern? At no time was such an interpretation given by Trotsky. From his point of view, entry could only be tactical, and could not involve militants' abandoning defense of their program.

It was quite another form of entrism that Pablo proposed, following the logic of his political premises. The entrism he proposed was supposed to be sui generis, which meant clandestine and prolonged entry. Despite his verbal optimism about an almost instant transformation of the international civil war into revolution, his formulation concerning centuries of transition was there to reduce any excessive hopes for revolution. And the nearness of the war required a rapid decision. The French split became inevitable after a decisive political confrontation between the leaders of the French majority and Pablo, which can be summed up as follows:

"Are our worker militants at Renault and other big factories supposed to enter the PCF?"

"Yes, they most of all."

"But they are all known as Trotskyists. The Stalinists will demand that they capitulate, that they will renounce Trotskyism."

"They will do it."

Thus, in 1951, Pabloism was characterized essentially by revision of the Trotskyist analysis of Stalinism, and only this revisionism can rightfully be called "Pabloism." Its results, which flowed logically from it, in particular the undercover entrism that it brought on can only be judged with respect to its political assumptions. It is particularly stupid to condemn all forms of undercover entrism as it is in general to make sweeping condemnations of a method apart from the context of its application.

History Touched Up

I see a question coming here:

"So, comrade, you claim in essence that in 1951-52 the Lambertists were right?"

In 1951 and 1952, neither Lambertism nor Lambertists existed. The very idea of Lambert as a theoretician or a leader of a tendency would have seemed comical to the leading team of the time. If the October 1952 issue of the magazine Quatrieme Internationale reported the split as a "abandonment" of the French section "by a tendency led by MM. Pierre Boussel-Lambert and Favre Bleibtreu," the name of Lambert was stressed out of a desire to discredit this tendency. This is made quite clear by the formulation as a whole (in particular the MM. which is completely unheard of in our ranks). What Lambert's rating really was is shown much better by the fact that when the majority sponsored him as a candidate on a local election in Paris in June 1952, that is a month before the split, La Verite introduced him in the following terms: "Pierre Lambert, a member of our Central Committee, a well known trade-union activist." These last words explain, moreover, why he was chosen as a candidate in this particular case. What was Lambert's role in the leading team, that is, the nucleus of the Central Committee which more or less regularly provided the membership of the Political Bureau? He played the role precisely of a specialist in trade-union questions for which he was specially equipped because of his strong pragmatic tendency, a rather fine feel for the reactions of the workers, a strong taste for the maneuvers and intrigues typical of this milieu. But his inclusion in the leadership was justified only within the framework of a politically solid and well-educated team. The more or less adventurous "inventions" of Lambert were well known and grated on the Political Bureau. However, in general, it was able to straighten things out before these schemes were actually put into practice, although from time to time, it found in them the general lines of a correct proposal. But if there was one thing no one expected from Lambert it was the least rigorous theoretical thought. Moreover, even in his own "realm" of trade-union work, Marcel Gibelin, a far more solid leader, looked over his work, and he was flanked by several other Central Committee members.

Before the emergence of Pabloism, that is early 1951, Lambert was more than moderate and prudent. On this point, the testimony in enseignements de (son) histoire is quite valuable. On page 86, he says, "The leaders of the workers commission declared their opposition to the Pabloist thesis, but did not want at the start to participate in the organization of the anti-Pabloist faction." Further on he says, "In 1950, the working class leaders had not fully assessed the scope of the political struggle from the standpoint of principles. (Emphasis in the original.) They hoped despite all the appearances, that the crisis could be resolved through discussion without any harm to the unity of the party and they intended to remain in the International." This admission goes a long way. It is so sweeping that in order to get the "Lambert group" under one heading, which is a rewriting of history, he slanders most of its members who were part of what Lambert calls the "anti-Pabloist faction" and did not share Lambert's reservations. This is a curious case of history rewritten for the sake of neatness, reproduced in a farcical way the tragic practices of Stalinism. One might suppose that the advantages of this neat simplification will console those who in the process of straightening out the kinks find that their understanding of where Pablo was going is postdated by a year. In 1951 (and not in 1950, as Les enseignements says, setting back the start of

the debate in France by a few months with a lightmindedness about dates that is not the only lightmindedness in this pamphlet), a revolutionary Marxist tendency, in the Pabloist sense of the term, did not exist in the "workers commission" as a whole any more than in 1946 or 1947. Lambert's tardiness in the anti-Pabloist struggle was his alone, and his pamphlet provides the reason in the form of a psychoanalytic confession: "The leaders of the workers commission had no confidence in the main 'theoreticians' of anti-Pabloism, (Germain (Mandel), and above all, Bleibtreu, who, although he was the first to understand the capitulationist implications of Pabloism and to understand them most fully, was a completely petty-bourgeois type. Moreover, the members of the workers commission professed the greatest contempt for the pretentious impotence of Frank, and most of all of Privas. On the organizational level, the workers commission had infinitely more confidence in Pablo." (My emphasis in the last sentence.)

The workers commission (i.e., Lambert) had confidence in Pablo. And while "the anti-Pabloist faction" engaged in political and theoretical struggle against Pablo, Lambert, on his own, engaged in negotiations with Pablo--not on the questions of principle at stake, but on what, for an empiricist without principles, was the essential thing, that is, a guarantee that the Pabloist current would not encroach on his domain, the instrument of trade union work represented by L'unité, which was a forum for dialogue and debate for unionists in the CGT, FO, and FEN, and the center for a kind of vague tendency. Pablo for his part was a man who believed in his ideas, and he was a much sharper maneuverer than Lambert. Thus, he dragged out the negotiations for a long time before unmasking Lambert in front of the whole organization as a miserable pedler. Lambert had no alternative but to fall in shamefacedly in the train of the anti-Pabloist current.

"Immediately after the workers commission took a stand, the relationships changed in the party and in the factional struggle. To a large extent, however, the workers commission still left the leadership of the struggle against the Pabloist positions to Bleibtreu..." Mythical history gives itself away by the unexplainable mysteries it contains. Accepting a leadership is only unexplainable in non-Marxist history. Either the leadership represents the body led, even if this is through deception, or it dominates by force. Since the latter case is excluded in a voluntary association, must we conclude that the French section and the leaders of its industrial work were so politically weak as individuals that they had no alternative but to follow a leader defined as a completely petty-bourgeois type with weakness "as an activist and organizer...that were known to all"?

In fact the contrary is true. Rarely has a political organization been so thoroughly homogenous, rarely has a political organization been so free of the tendency to fall into tailending. This, moreover, explains why Lambert was so completely isolated in his sordid maneuvers with Pablo. This also explains why Pablo's denunciation of the opportunism of the L'unité grouping was parried by a purge of the rightist elements from the FO that had filtered into it. This, finally, explains why so many workers in the organization (which was made up essentially of workers, it should be recalled) only slowly and cautiously engaged in a debate that was at once violent and confused on a number of points. But it also explains why the con-

confidence of these workers in the political leadership they elected represented neither their political inadequacy nor mechanical tailending. Eleibtreu had, it is true, disagreeable faults of character that harmed him more than they did the organization--and these faults made him quite incapable of becoming a charismatic leader--but he was nonetheless regularly elected from the time the French majority came into existence, that is from 1946 on, as the political secretary of the party and/or political editor of the paper. Here again, Lambert could only construct his myth by slandering the working-class majority of the time, whose representative he claims to be. It is true that almost all of the members of this majority abandoned him long ago,

The grain of truth in this fairy tale is that in this debate, in which numerous excesses were committed by both sides, the confidence that various people had won as a result of previous political battles did not fail to play a role, as is always the case, even in the most highly politicized conflicts. But the role they played was opposite to what the Lambertist history claims, or at least what is claimed by its predominant sector (because a fragment of a paragraph on page 89 has to admit that a "minority of worker militants, essentially in Finistaire where the Trotskyist workers ... had played a magnificent and leading role in the April 1950 strike at the Brest arsenal, declared for Pablo.") But what the document does not say is that the confidence of the militants in the international leaders who had led the struggle against the rightist current, which held the majority in France from the summer of 1946 to the winter of 1947, and who had been shown to stand to the right on a number of questions, was reinforced by the lack of confidence in Lambert himself, who was known for his fancy steps as a "tightrope walker" (an expression that was frequently used against him). That is, his joining the anti-Pabloist majority, far from being an advantage for this current, proved later to be as catastrophic as Pabloism itself. In fact, to assess the real meaning of Lambert's joining the anti-Pabloite majority does not involve regarding him as neutral. It meant--although the majority was not aware of it at the time--that in the struggle against Pablo, elements were drawn in whose organizational conservatism and political equivocation were to undermine the axis of the struggle and cause a number of comrades to opt for Pabloism, since they made their decision not on the basis of theoretical considerations but on the basis on conclusions about how to build the party. And this was all the more true inasmuch as Lambert, who has never been inhibited by a sense of shame, elbowed his way forward from the tail end by utilizing all sorts of pressures and methods to break into the leading group of the majority.

As for what the Lambertist history calls the "anti-Pabloist faction," this was no more a faction than the workers commission that is counterposed to it in Les enseignements. It had greater homogeneity, however, because its nucleus consisted of the editorial board of the paper La verite. This nucleus, which the "Lambert group" has written out of history, referring to it only in passing as "Bleibtreu and his friends" (a formula which in our ranks designates cliques, although this was a group of militants free of any spirit of chuminess), included along with Bleibtreu, political editor; Maurin (Lequenne), editor-in-chief; and L. Fontanel and D. Righetti, in particular, was a working-class militant (from the Chausson factory, from which he had been fired for actions connected with strikes), who had been entrusted with the highest responsibility in the organization. He had very often been a member of the Political Bureau and for a time was secretary of this body. But the "faction" also included leaders who later became "Lambertists," such as Gerard Bloch (at that time in the provinces), Gariner-Rebard, leader of the Renault cells, and Garrive-Berne. In March 1953, that is, nine months after the split, the majority in the Political Bureau of the PCI was still made up of Bleibtreu, Bloch, Garrive, Lequenne, with a minority consisting of Lambert and Just (minutes of the meeting of March 3, 1953.) The Central Committee reversed this majority by one vote. This was the modest beginning of Lambertism as a leadership.

To complete the assessment of this mystical history, is it true, conversely, that all these anti-Pabloites formed a tendency--in the sense of an informal current--representing a sectarian tradition, as the Pabloites claim? Is it true that in the final analysis two groups were constituted or reconstituted in this struggle, one of which "The Lambert tendency, already represented at the time a centrist current in the traditional Trotskyist movement, buffeted back and forth between sectarian and extremely opportunist positions, and endowed with a particularly authoritarian, quasi-'Stalinist' internal regime" (as the Pabloists say in their May 1972 document entitled Contribution pour une appreciation critique...), while the other, the International Secretariat, "established in Paris...(acted as) the real leadership of the French section, which was entirely subordinate to it and involved in its intrigues, which very often took the place of political line" (as the Lambertists say in Les enseignements...) Without dwelling on the exaggerated nature of these opposing claims, which by itself exposes them, it is notable that this history, which has been retouched in opposite ways, is written in the Stalinist style of the CP(b) of the USSR, that is, keeping just enough real names to give new pseudonyms to the devil and to his opposite, the good Lord. What real tendencies existed prior to the 1951-52 conflict? A sectarian tendency had existed from the unification of the PCI in 1944 in the middle of the war, up to 1945--a left minority which included almost all the former leaders of the Comite communiste internationaliste (CCI) including Privas and Minguet, who belonged to the Pabloite tendency

2. Yvan Craipeau, in Le mouvement Trotskyste en France, claims that the majority leadership of the PCI after the 1944 unification was under the political influence of the sectarian CCI group (p. 200). This, once again, is "tidying up" history for the sake

of a thesis. Our historians definitely not only have bad memories, but they don't consult the documents either.

and Minguet, who belonged to the Pabloite tendency in 1951-52, and still do. This tendency went over to the international majority, recognizing that it had been mistaken in its assesment of events. They were integrated into the majority, all the more completely because of the harshness of the subsequent struggle against the rightist tendency of Craipeau, Parisot, Demazières, M. Paillet. The rightist current in its entirety left the PCI at the beginning of 1948. Between this date and the 1951-52 crisis, no formally defined tendency developed. But it is true that conflicts occurred among various currents on one or several isolated questions. The most important of these questions was the Yugoslav break with the USSR at the end of 1948. On this point, the great majority of the French leadership at first opposed the line of the international leadership, which advocated critical support to the Yugoslav CP, while the French CC, during the first months, saw this conflict as a struggle between Stalinist bureaucracies, whose most probable outcome, in the absence of the involvement of the masses, would be capitulation to the Kremlin (which shows, by the way, how little this French leadership was "subordinated" to the international leadership).

In February 1949, a Central Committee plenum discussed the Yugoslav question for the first time on the basis of a report which represented a preliminary attempt to reconcile the opposing thésis. However, two opposing resolutions were presented. The Maurin-Gibelin resolution--introduced by the reporter--got the jamority, with seven votes, as against two votes for a resolution by Bleibtreu, who defended the line of the International. These two votes were cast by P. Frank and Bleibtreu (along with the consultative vote of Maurin Lequenne, a candidate member). Future Pabloist and ultra-Pabloists mingled their votes with those of future Lambertists and that of Righetti. Of the five abstentions, two were cast by future Pabloists, two by future Lambertists. Thus the so-called profound currents that Pablo claims existed are a myth.

As for the "regime" in the organization, if the seeds of bureaucratization existed, they were on the side of Pablo and his ultra-centralized leadership of the International. In this respect, it was Bleibtreu once again who during the second world congress of the International in 1948 brought together a certain number of delegates, including some of those with the longest history in the movement, to inform them of his concern, which they shared, about this, and to consider ways to remedy it. Thus we see how the present currents, which are outside the International, are obliged in order to project a continuity back into the past "to forget" a lot of facts and remodel history in accordance with their needs. In plain language, this is called falsifying.

The Birth of Lambertism

In July 1952, the split was consummated on the day the congress of the Parti Communiste Internationaliste opened. Two congresses met in the same building on two different floors. The strange thing, showing how much the split precipitated by Pablo and his ultras took place on the basis of only an incipient debate, is that in each of these two congresses two tendencies formed. Within two years this was to lead to two new splits. I do not propose here to deal with the history of the Pabloite minority of the PCI, which became the official section of the Fourth International, and with its correcting its course. I will return to this at another point. Of concern here is the congress of the majority that gave birth to the Lambertist tendency, which now defined itself for the first time in opposition to the leadership that had conducted the struggle against Pablo's revisionist theories.

Here again some admissions are to be found in the Lambertist pamphlet Les enseignements. Thus mention is made in several places of how "the profound demoralization brought on by the split aggravated the situation created by the desertion of the veteran cadres." But this explanation does not at all specify what the effects of this demoralization were and how it was manifested. The function of this "confession" is in essence to shift the confused and embarrassed "self-criticism" of Lambert and his accomplices onto the organization.

What situation faced the truncated Trotskyist organization? At that time we were headed into the dark years of the European workers movement, which was chloroformed by the economic recovery and disarmed by its leadership, the Social Democrats, who touched bottom in their servility towards imperialism, and the Stalinists who were caught up in one of their maddest courses, Communist-chauvinist adventurism that was both sectarian and rightist. The workers were demoralized by a colonial war against which their leaders conducted only a pseudo-battle. In such a climate, any success scored by the policy of the Trotskyists (and there were successes in a number of areas) was followed by a slump to a level lower than the starting point.

The fact was not understood that Pablo's theoretical innovations interlocked with organizational solutions that everyone was seeking. It had become a truism for almost all of the cadres of the organization that the linear construction of an independent party, starting from a numerically tiny base, could not solve the problem of providing the revolutionary party demanded by history. This is why the idea of a special kind of entryism in the PCF was regarded by a section of the militants as a miraculous solution.

The anti-Pabloist French leadership was far from underestimating the need for a turn and for clandestine faction work in the PCF, but it made a clear distinction between such work and entryism sui generis, which followed from the theoretical bases explained above. It is quite curious that the Enseignements takes note of the theoretical work of the majority in the following paragraph (where we express our comment in the parentheses):

"The documents published by the majority were essentially the Ten Theses (written by E. Mandel before he went over to Pablo), which were adopted by the Seventh Congress and a series of articles entitled Where is Comrade Pablo Going? by Favre-Bleibtreu, which were written in June 1951, but published only at the beginning of 1953." This is a curious paragraph, because while it cites as essential the documents written by men whom Lambert and the pure Lambertists scorned, it forgets a document that was also essential and was written by a comrade who later became a Lambertist, Garrive-Berne. This document was devoted to the majority's concept of the work to be done in the PCF. There are two reasons for this oversight: it would not jibe with the version that the Lambertists later gave of "Pabloism"; and here we touch on the debate over the orientation to be adopted by the organization, which had been reduced to its lowest level since the war.³

³ The Enseignements ... also contains lies and contradictions, as regards the number of members of the PCI majority after the 1953 split: on page 88 we read that there were 150 members; on page 93 there were no more than 100. What is involved here is an attempt to minimize the subsequent collapse and the fact that there really were only about "50" in 1958.

In fact the actual 1:4 relationship between the minority and the majority gives the real figures: there were 50 to 60 as against 200 to 250 at the time of the split.

Lambertism originated in this debate.

In fact the line of cleavage in the "majority" congress involved this question. As long as the struggle against Pablo continued, Lambert did not raise his voice against the Garrive document and the use the majority made of it. For him this was a tactical matter. But there was no question from his standpoint of proceeding to implement such a perspective for work in the PCF. As was his custom, he did not take up a fight in the congress on the fundamental level but argued that in view of the state of our forces it was impossible in practice to implement such a perspective; and he fought for "retreat to the trade-union arena," as he "admits" in the following words on page 94 of his Enseignements: "The veteran nucleus found itself forced to take the organization by the hand to lead it into the essential fight in the plants and in the unions."

The discussion was not carried through to a conclusion at this congress; before long it flared up again after the expulsion of Andre Marty from the PCF. In the Enseignements, Marty is mentioned only in a few lines on page 95, where we read: "it was necessary to break with Marty with whom the French Trotskyists had correctly established contact when the Stalinists began a witch-hunt against him. In making this contact we had neither overlooked his past nor his incapacity to draw the lessons from it in a thoroughgoing way. But a break became necessary once it became clear that the former secretary of the PCF refused to take up the political struggle." These lines can be characterised

only as a tissue of hypocrisy and slander. First of all it was not "the French Trotskyists" who "correctly" established "contact" with Marty, since in this brochure the expression "French Trotskyists" means the Lambertists. It was Bleibtreu who did this, taking all of the risks. He did this not only to defend Marty, who was being subjected to a "witch-hunt" by the Stalinists, but because it was obvious to the "politicals" in the leadership (a term I use here for convenience to distinguish them from the Lambertist "trade-unionists") that the expulsion of Marty represented the expulsion of a current from the PCF -- the current of "resistance fighters," who had nostalgic memories of the Communism of the Comintern period and who felt uneasy over the trials of the "cominformists" and the denunciations of Titoist Yugoslavia. In a nutshell, the "politicals" saw in this current a basis for work in the PCF that Lambert rejected.

This contact proved particularly profitable because Marty was far from naive and was determined to take up the political struggle despite a certain demoralization, age, and illness; and he moved half way toward us because he had been watching us for years and had largely overcome his conditioning against Trotskyism. The book that he wrote, and that we helped get published shows clearly that he was not at all reluctant to look at his own past and make a self-criticism. On the other hand, at his age, and after a life like his, it was very difficult to become a Trotskyist. This was all the more true because he found himself faced with a splintered Trotskyist movement and could not entirely understand the debate between the various groups. The slanderous lines in the Enseignements once again let the cat out of the bag: They show the hostility in principal to the political work that had proved necessary. That did not mean getting Marty to join the Trotskyist movement in a spectacular way; which would have just created a tempest in a teapot and which, for the rank and file of the PCF would have seemed to justify the slanders of the leadership, but it did mean concrete work to get Marty and his veteran supporters to start from their common political experience and follow the road of their own development to the end through a struggle centered around carefully chosen actions. Such work was developed essentially between Marty and Bleibtreu (Charles Lemoin, the veteran communist shop steward in the miners union, who had considerable authority among the "blacknecks" also took part). But this work was systematically sabotaged by Lambert and his emerging tendency. "We did not have the forces"; it would "divert us from trade union work." Later, when the tendencies had taken form, and in a process that extended throughout the year of 1953, the Lambert tendency gained a majority and took control of this work (which was represented by "committees for correction of the Communist line"), helping to bring about its failure. But it only made a contribution; Stalinist agents did the rest.

But this "Lambertist" contribution was not a negligible one. The real revolutionary opposition within the CP was not represented by Marty, Lambert and company said, but by Benoit Franchon! As a result, they got back on a trade-union footing.

But we have gotten ahead of ourselves. Now, having said what we said above about the quality of the PCI as a working-class

organization with a worker majority, can we explain that a Lambert, who was generally viewed quite disdainfully by these ranks, could have become their leader, opposing the political leadership that had conducted the struggle against Pabloism?

The ups and downs of the class struggle are more decisive than the qualities of individuals or groups. In the ebbs of the workers movement (and this period was one of profound retreat) the vanguard stagnates and is broken up by the pressure of the opposing current. Trotsky taught us that it is not enough to be right to win when the class is divided and demoralized. To the contrary, the vanguard is always caught by the backlash of this demoralization and division. The working-class base of the party had fought a defensive struggle. But its victory was a pyrrhic victory. It was exhausted. Many comrades withdrew, discouraged. Calling on it to undertake new hazardous tasks brought on a reaction that was all the more negative because it had the impression that in the recent past operations on a grand scale such as the "brigades", in which the PCI had organized trips to Yugoslavia for 3,000 youth "to see the truth and tell it," had been conducted at the expense of slow and patient work in the plants and unions for the sake of gains in members and sympathizers that were in the final analysis small and ephemeral.

In demoralization, intellectuals revise theory and often find their way out along this route. Workers retreat into the class, into their elementary life, the everyday struggle to make a living. Lambert won his victory in the depths of demoralization. Excellent militants followed him out of a minimalist conservatism. Most of these left him over the following years, as he himself has had to admit.

THE MECHANISM THROUGH WHICH THE ELEMENTS OF LAMBERTISM WERE ASSEMBLED

It was not, however, within Lambert's capacity to transform the PCI into a trade-union pressure group. He needed a political cover. By himself he was quite incapable of winning acceptance as a political leader, and the former leaders of the majority were not willing to accord him preeminence of any kind. Thus Lambert set about to break up the leadership like a veritable miniature Stalin. He gained control of the apparatus, of the organization's finances. The bloc of the editorial board of the paper stood in his way. He undermined it by getting all the full-time positions on the paper eliminated. The joint leadership of plant and trade-union work got in his way. He took advantage of a formal error by Gibelin (taking part in a trade-union trip to the USSR without asking the permission of the CC) to get a reluctant Central Committee, affected by skillful slanders, to expel him. On his return, Gibelin refused to fight for his reintegration. It was, in fact, a double blow. Graves (J. Danos), a close friend of Gibelin, and one of the leaders of anticolonialist work, which Lambert also concerned himself with, left the organization at the same time.

Against these "politicals", Lambert gradually built up a heterogeneous bloc where, in place of political homogeneity, there was a combination of bitterness, mediocrity, dogmatism, and patho-

logical fantasizing. The first battleground was the discussion on the evolution of the USSR from the Nineteenth congress of the CP(b) of the USSR to the first turn that followed the death of Stalin in March 1953. On one side was the "Lambert group," whose theoreticians beginning in the summer of 1953 were the trio Garive-Just-Bloch; on the other the Bleubtreu-Lequenne-Righetti-Fontainel tendency.

The analyses provided by Comrade Karl Landon at that time in *La Verite* on the basis of a genuinely Marxist, that is, Trotskyist "sovietology," sometimes reached seemingly strange conclusions (such as viewing Beria as a "de-Stalinizer" from March to July 1953). But they gave the only key to understanding the immediate and subsequent phenomena and were confirmed later by the best testimony and analyses of the most sharply opposed tendencies.⁴

4. See among others, B.I. Nikolaevsky, Les dirigeants sovietiques et la lutte pour le pouvoir (denoel, Lettre Nouvelle); G. Palocz-Horvat, Khrouchtchev (Gallimard), etc.

As against these analyses, the "theoreticians" of the Lambert group offered nothing more than an escalation of violent denunciations of the bureaucracy. This sort of game dispenses with any need for analysis, above all when its supported by ideological terrorism. The failure to understand the contradictions running through the Soviet bureaucracy was to lead to an inability to understand the real meaning of the "de-Stalinization" period.

Of course, this sectarian dogmatism could succeed only because it found a prop in the experience of the militants. This basis was the situation in the workers movement, the terrorist sectarianism of the PCF, and a CGT that was entirely under its heel. There was only one break in this situation of stagnation--and it also provided a break in the factional struggle in the PCI. That was the great general strike in August 1953. But the sabotage of this strike by its Stalinist leadership was to end the offensive capacity of the working class for a long time. The road was opened to 1958 by way of the Algerian war. The weakest and most contemptible governments of the Fourth Republic were able to live out their long death agony in the midst of scandals and blood; they had no class enemies who wanted to destroy them by revolutionary means. The defeat of the 1953 strike also defeated what was left of the old political leadership of the PCI. Lambertism was able to develop. Its formal continuity was transformed into a profound discontinuity.

(a) Rightist Trade-unionism.

The systematic expulsion of our militants from the CGT (to which 90 percent of them belonged) had forced a certain retreat toward the only other mass union at the time, the CGT-FO, where there was then a genuine left current which, with the help of the Trotskyist forces, won great successes. This current succeeded in

gaining dominance in the Paris federation and even in forming a short-lived trade-union youth organization in the FO that in 1955 took very left positions against the Algerian war.

Nonetheless, such a required investment in forces was not without its dangers in a period of retreat in the workers movement. It was possible to counterbalance these dangers only with an extremely firm and rigorous political orientation and a thorough-going rejection of dubious alliances. But Lambertism was dominated by the opportunist empiricism of its leader, who at the same time was one of two principal leaders of the Trotskyist faction in the FO. Moreover, in expelling the other leader-- Gibelin-- from the PCI, Lambert could not so easily deprive him of the great prestige he held in the FO left. In fact, he failed in his attempts to discredit Gibelin and eliminate him from this tendency. To the contrary, Gibelin became the one who did the thinking for the tendency and who served as its best tactician. Lambert's reaction to this failure was not that of a revolutionary militant, but that of a miserable bureaucrat: He created a new tendency, a fake left, based on petty bureaucrats, often corrupt, who used violent language on the floor of the FO congresses to maintain their base, but who were led around like sheep by Bothereau, whose reports they voted for (Lambert did not fail to acquire this habit, as we know). This game enabled Lambert to assemble only a rump tendency, but it enabled the National Bureau of the FO to break the left tendency by a whole series of bureaucratic operations that matched those of the Stalinists; and they finally destroyed it. Needless to say, the most advanced members of this left wing were thrown back, at best to a purely day-to-day trade unionism, at worst, to an anti-Trotskyism reinforcing their anti-communism.

The anti-communism of this union federation put pressure on the PCI, and the trade-union activity in the FEN reinforced this pressure, all the more so since Lambert found his firmest "trade-union" support in a group of teachers around R. Cheremy, a dyed-in-the-wool opportunist whose fundamental objective was to get a trade-union job, even if this was at the price of dubious alliances and not through the defense of principled positions. The harsh law of struggling against the stream, which isolates revolutionists in periods of retreat by the workers movement, was more and more evaded by the Lambertist leadership by hiding under high-flown but empty phrases typical of run-of-the-mill sectarians.

At the same time as the old editorial board of the paper was eliminated, Lambert and those around him developed close friendships with a number of centrists and reformists whose only leftism was their labels.

In such a course, the need for a political struggle was denied by means of the following schema:

1. The masses "drift" from their political leaderships. The question of a political united front of the working class and its parties is no longer posed. Thus, there is no need for

a political program (here we note the nice continuity with the present Lambertist policy for which the united front is, to the contrary, the icing on the cake of its whole policy, although a purely verbal icing to be sure).

2. The masses remain loyal to their trade-union organizations: a trade-union united front is thus sufficient to solve all the problems of unity in action.

3. Trade-union unity in action makes possible the general strike. The general strike makes possible the seizure of power. Therefore, agitating for trade-union unity in action is the answer to all the problems of revolution (but then, the CFTC-CFDT which was analysed as the "union of the Catholic hierarchy," was not yet the number two trade-union federation).

(b) Conditional anticolonialism.

The struggle against the colonial oppression of our own imperialism was the pride of the French section. After the Second World War, when the PCF was party to the massacres of Setif and Guelma, when in the name of the struggle against "Japanese facism," it encouraged the ex-FTP, integrated in Leclerc's army, to take part in the reoccupation of "French" Indochina, when its policy was to support the "straightjacket framework" of the French union, that is, a verbal cover modeled on the "commonwealth" for continuing colonial oppression by trying to integrate the national bourgeoisies of the colonies into it. The PCI was the only French organization to take up the struggle against the colonial war in Vietnam. It did this with the massive support of the powerful *Partie du peuple Algerien*, which in 1947 became the *Mouvement pour de triomphe des libertes democratiques* (MFLD). At that time, this movement organized almost all the Algerian workers in France and their immense majority in Algeria itself. The fact that we were isolated among the French organizations, on the other hand, gave us an influence and authority among revolutionists in the colonial countries that was out of proportion to our strength in France itself.

But at the beginning of the black decade of the 1950s, in this arena too, our vanguard was caught in the undertow of the ignominious state of the workers movement in the imperialist centers. Our aid to the colonial revolution was tiny in comparison with the needs of the peoples who themselves were the first to take up the struggle for their liberation. In 1954, Ho Chi Minh was compelled to sign the miserable Geneva accords, which was unworthy of the victory of Dien Bien Phu. The bourgeois and petty-bourgeois nationalist organizations in the colonies sought a path of compromise with French imperialism. Bourguiba was not long in finding such a path in collaboration with Mendes-France. Then, Morocco became independent as a "monarchy," while Algeria entered into a revolutionary war.

Lambert got into so-called colonial work through his trade-union activity. In particular, in connection with the problems of trade-union activity by Algerian workers.

Here again, his role was far from that of the main leader. But his activism and his talents for intrigue with "personalities" led him rapidly to play a role that was as important as it was pernicious. The opportunist pressures that favored the situation of stagnation went too much in the direction of his own opportunist bent not to create a "snowball" effect. This did not fail to produce reactions. Thus the fact that Messali, the leader of the PPA-MTLD, became a Hadj, that is, was supposed to have made a pilgrimage to Mecca; the fact that this old Communist of the Etoile-Nord African group let his beard grow, started wearing the chechia, and started making a show of observing Ramadan, was hardly compatible with the Bolshevik credentials that Lambert accorded him. All the opportunism of this aging leader was covered up in the name of his need for contact with the masses, and the harmlessness of Islam, a religion without priests, without a church. It is correct to say that the whole leadership prior to the 1952 split must be held collectively responsible for negligence in this area. This paralysis was related to an erroneous conception of the need to "unconditionally defend the revolutionary movement of the colonized countries." When the differences emerged acutely, it was too late to check the Lambertist degeneration. Let us list the facts. In the indictment "justifying" the demand in February 1955 for expelling the leaders that the Enseignements then called "Bleibtreu and his friends," after having called them more correctly the "anti-Pa'loite faction," among other charges, Lequenne was accused of "anti-party work in the Cercle Lenin!" At first this astonished him. He did not understand until later, after reflection, what was involved. With Cheramy, Lequenne led this public discussion club. It was in one of these debates, "a discussion of support for the anticolonial struggles," that the sacrilege was committed. Daniel Guerin, who participated in the debate, had challenged the notion of "unconditional defense" as regards organizations such as the Neo-Destour. Lambert took a position opposing this criticism. At the time he tolerated no programmatic criticism of these organizations. That was his conception of unconditional defense. Lequenne, on the other hand, replied to Guerin that the adjective "unconditional" should not lead to any confusion, that support for these organizations in their struggle against our imperialism, without presenting any conditions, did not mean that we should give up our right of fraternal criticism, that such criticism was, in fact, a duty for Communists. That was the "antiparty work" in question. The Lambertist "line" had been violated. This anecdote clarifies the attitude that Lambert was to take in the Algerian war.

Well before 1954, Le mouvement pour le triomphe des libertes democratiques (MTLD) was in crisis. It was divided into two tendencies that opposed each other more and more violently: a majority on the Central Committee (the centralists), who were strongly influenced by the PCF, and the minority ("Messalists"), who held on both to the radical revolutionary tradition of the movement and to their loyalty to its charismatic leader. The independence of Tunisia heated up this crisis to fever pitch. The example of the Neo-Destour party pushed the MTLD Central Committee majority onto its opportunist path -- into seeking

the conditions for a negotiated settlement with French imperialism, returning to the legal road. For some time, this majority, strengthening its ties with the PCF, had already loosened those it had previously established with the Trotskyists. The reaction by Messali and the "messalist" minority to this opportunist orientation was by no means to prepare for an insurrection, but instead to adopt a desperate line of urban terrorism whose adventurism should have been clear to those who had been educated on this question by Trotsky's Terrorism and Communism. But to the comrades who were struck by consternation over this line, Lambert opposed his "unconditional defense" of, and his confidence in, Messali. The split in the MFLD in the summer of 1954 did not give rise to differences between the tendencies of the PCI because it was clear that Messali and his tendency represented both the real majority of the organization and its radical wing. But we know that the solution came in Algeria from a third current, the former OS (Organisation Special, a small clandestine branch of the MFLD formed to organize the illegal struggles). This group had not gotten involved in the struggle between the two main tendencies, in part because of its contempt for theoretical discussion and its cult of direct action. After becoming the CRUA, the men of the OS unleashed an armed struggle on the Vietnamese model and were to form the FLN after being joined by the "Centralists" who had found the doors of legalism brutally slammed in their faces. The Lambertist method -- if we dare call it that -- became glaringly evident at the moment of the Algerian insurrection. What Lambert based himself on was not an analysis of reality any more than principles, even the formerly sacred one of "unconditional defense" of those conducting a struggle; it was on "confidence in Messali" and the special relationship Lambert had established with him.

Mechanically reversing the relationship established by the colonists between France and its colonies, Lambert proclaimed "the French revolution has begun"...in the Aures mountains, or more precisely, among the Messalist guerrillas, whom he declared were more numerous and had a more decisive weight than the guerrillas of the CRUA.

A demonstration of Force Ouvriere white-collar workers, (that is, the left wing of this federation, which was called against the threatened war in November 1954 in the Place de l'Opera) was for Lambert a sign of the extension of the "civil war" (sic).

Suddenly, the difference on colonial policy, which had been a secondary one in the PCI, became the main one. Given the political importance of this new colonial war, there is nothing surprising in the fact that this question created a line of rupture. Lambert had no difficulty--with the help of a few maneuvers--in expelling the opposition to him which had become a minority (covering it with filth, according to his custom). The extent of the stakes did not allow him to risk losing his majority. Numerically he lost in the immediate period only about 15 percent of the organization. But this included not only half of the remaining veteran cadres (six members out of the 23 on the Central Committee and 3 members of the Control Commission) and important cadres in industrial work (including three leaders of the work in the PTT), but above all, he lost all of the forces that had kept him in check.

We know that his support for Messalism was to continue until Bellounis, the main leader of Messali's guerrillas, went over to the ranks of the army of colonial repression. Was this cruel proof of his error to lead him to a correction?

To a certain degree the degeneration became irreversible. The Bellounis experience only led Lambert to a fundamental change in his attitude toward colonial revolutions: No more "unconditional defense"; henceforth, he would only support purely Bolshevik revolutions.

He adopted a miserable neutrality toward the Algerian revolution. And then he denounced the leadership of the Vietnamese revolution as Stalinist. The lock snapped shut. This is what happens to those who navigate without a theoretical compass, without any wider horizon than their own backyard.

The International Committee

In 1953 the split in the international extended throughout the world. The sections that had been unable to understand theoretical Pabloism discovered it a year too late--on the basis of tactical problems. Pablo had the tactical skill to isolate the French section in his struggle against it. But he did not succeed in internationalizing his operation. Cut in two for ten years, the international was only a shadow of itself.

As soon as the rupture occurred between the international and the English and Swiss sections and the SWP, Bleibtreu and Lequenne established contacts and shortly afterward the International Committee of the Fourth International was formed. Here again, in order to assess the "Lambertist" continuity, it is interesting to refer to the documents of the International Committee and first of all to its founding declaration of November 23, 1953 (published in La Verite #326, December 4, 1953). Of the signers of this statement, not a single one is now a member of the OCI or of the grouplets it has organized here and there throughout the world. Not a single one, and there are no representatives of the formations that subsequently joined the first four organizations that grouped together in 1953. On the other hand, not a single one of the more or less shadow groups that are presently members of the organization of the same name, with the exception of the OCI, was a member of this grouping in the first ten years of its existence.

In March 1954, when the two currents of the PCI had crystallized into tendencies, the Lambertists, under the pretext of discipline, voted to oust Bleibtreu from his post as the party's representative to the International Committee (shortly after, moreover, Bleibtreu and Lequenne were removed from the Political Bureau). It required a long document by Bloch and Renard to try to justify this apparatus move to the International Committee. The axis of this document was the need to "proletarianize" the leadership, to transform it by pushing forward "the best proletarian elements rooted in the working class." These elements were seen as being more secure "from pro-Stalinist deviations...as well as from sectarian ultraleftism." Here we recognize the emergence of the theory of a "proletarian" tendency, which was already denounced by the minority as vulgar workerism. This "proletarianization" was itself justified by a revolutionary upsurge of the French proletariat. The minority did not oppose with sufficient energy this policy of mistaking the twilight for the dawn. Even if it had, this would not have changed the response very much. In periods of retreat, those who dare call an ebb by its name are always scorned by the charlatans who announce imminent victories. And the real representatives of the vanguard suffered defeats as the organization melted away, losing a section of its best elements, who were disoriented by the contradiction between the prophecies and the reality, while the sectarian visionaries became harder after every defeat.

The International Committee was as discreet in its conflict with its new section as the international had been in the 1951-52 struggle. This time, it based itself on a principle of non-intervention in the "internal" affairs of the section, which was the opposite extreme of the ultracentralism previously imposed by Pablo. But it must be said also that the International Committee was subjected to blackmail by threats of the Lambertists to leave every time it tried to take up the "French question".

However, when the PCI minority was expelled in March 1955, the International Committee adopted unanimously, with the exception of the vote of the representative of the majority of the PCI (in the meantime, Bleibtreu had returned as a representative of the minority), a resolution, the first point of which read: "It was with indignation that the IC learned of the decision taken by the CC of the PCI on March 21 to expel comrades Bleibtreu, Lequenne, and Fontanel; all the more so because these comrades have shown their revolutionary firmness and did not abandon the party banner under interrogation by the police." The IC noted subsequently for the benefit of the PCI leadership that "democratic centralism correctly understood does not seek to isolate a minority of a party and exclude it from collaboration, but to the contrary, it seeks to draw minorities into collaboration, and it seeks constantly to reduce any possible frictions. It is precisely by such behavior that a revolutionary organization demonstrates its maturity and its consciousness of its responsibilities before the working class." But in view of the fact that "the IEC is unable and unwilling to intervene in the internal life of its sections," it can only "appeal to the PCI, calling on it to reconsider its March 21 decision and reintegrate the expelled members, to guarantee the minority tendency full right of representation as a tendency in all the leading bodies." This appeal fell on deaf ears.

The axis given to the struggle of the International Committee at the time of its formation was "reintegration" into Fourth International. A determined struggle for this objective would doubtless not fail to gain results. Stalin's death and the beginning of the "de-Stalinization" modified the very basis of Pabloism and the relationship of forces among the new currents in the Fourth International. Thus, the Ceylonese denounced the ambiguities and contradictions of the document "Rise and Decline of Stalinism." The ultra-Pabloist (the Michel Mestre-Courvin tendency) were preparing to break with the international to become pure and simple Stalinists. But like the analysis of the internal evolution of the USSR, that of the evolution of the Fourth International itself could not be carried out in the PCI without becoming exposed to the accusation of Pabloism. Aside from the pretexts, what underlay the expulsion of the minority tendency was the desire of the Lambertists to change the orientation, to adopt an orientation towards the "reconstitution" of a federative parallel Fourth International. In this way they turned their back on the principles Trotsky laid down as the basis for the international as the world party of the socialist revolution. Very soon, the International Committee became no more than a federation where every leader or small group lacking leadership jealously guarded its uncontrolled "national" authority. This situation could only lead to the end actually experienced by this committee, a chain-reaction breakup.

(d) The Internal Regime

We saw above that the self-justifying history of the Pabloists in 1972 claims that the internal regime of the PCI before 1952 was not democratic. We have already said that this was a strange case of turning reality upside down. The number and frequency of internal bulletins, the regularity of the congresses (which were held at least every two years), the great stability of the activist nucleus of the organization, the character of the debates, the fact that opposing documents were debated without this leading in most cases to a crystallization of tendencies testify against this affirmation.

Before 1952, when currents broke from the international, they left voluntarily, and were not expelled, regardless of whether there was a subsequent vote for expulsion.

Of course, it is not enough to be just a small organization to escape the dangers of bureaucratism. It would be naive to think that these dangers are simply the product in a sort of automatic way of the formation of vast political machines. The real source of bureaucratism lies in the states of demoralization and lethargy in the working class that affect its vanguard. As the class advances, the activists that are carried along by it find in its movement and its experiences the energy to challenge and correct the formulations of the intellectuals in the movement who have often come in from the outside or who left the working class by the very process of becoming intellectuals. In periods of retreat, we have already seen that a two-pronged negative development promotes the ossification of the leaderships--a withdrawal out of discouragement; a confidence based on past experiences, and a confidence in those who promise victories in the near future to compensate for the grim present. It was such an evolution that splintered the Fourth International in the 1950s.

Every morning the Lambertist charletans in particular promised a triumphant tomorrow. They drew together in a defensive way and their contradictions were as manifold as the tendencies represented by each one of the leaders of this current. Thus, Lambert is fundamentally an unprincipled opportunist who stresses the mass organizations, above all the unions, at the expense of the revolutionary party. S. Just is a sectarian turned inward by fighting against the stream, who exalts the party without taking account of its embryonic reality. To cover up their unprincipled bloc, they have to prevent the discussion of ideas, and replace it by disciplinary conflicts, or even sordid personal quarrels. Apparatus maneuvers are the resort of those who have little confidence that they can win their point in a democratic debate. In the spring of 1954, the members of the minority were removed from the leadership of the party. The most important disagreements, those on the Soviet Union and on the action program, were simply taken off the agenda of the Ninth Congress in June 1954

by simple majority votes. The minority resolutions were published neither before the congress nor in the ten months that followed it before the expulsions. Such practices were completely unprecedented in our organizations, even during the 1951-52 struggle. However, it would be wrong to think that in hardly more than two years this organization became a corpse. On March 18, 1955, a general assembly of the Paris region, that is, of a great majority of the PCI, gave a 56 percent majority to a resolution by Bleibtreu demanding that an end be put to a situation that was dividing the party in the face of the repression it was suffering as a result of its position of supporting the Algerian uprising and, precisely, the lack of representation of tendencies in the Political Bureau despite repeated demands. There was no consultation of the minority tendencies, although four members of the minority were involved in the affair.⁵

5. This regards the first indictment for a violation of state security which was lodged as a result of the position taken in support of the Algerian revolution directly afterth the 1954 uprising by the majority of the PCI.

A central committee meeting had not been called despite the demand that had been raised and the urgent need for such a meeting. The motion ended with these words: "The general assembly demands that democratic centralism be reestablished to weld the party into a single front in its struggle against the repression."

Two days later, the Central Committee meeting that the leadership had refused to call for months was announced by special delivery letters and telegrams. It expelled Bleibtreu, Lequenne, and Fontanel after a half hour of debate, most of which was taken up by Lequenne's reply to the majority indictment. In political solidarity with the persons expelled, three other members of this tendency on the Central Committee, Righetti, Margne and Mogard, as well as a member of the Control Commission (one of three), Claude (J. Weill) left with them. The PCI (majority) lost about 15 percent of its members in the operation. But its nature changed. Three years later, the Enseignements inform us, it was reduced to a quarter of its initial membership. In other words, to just two and one half times the number represented by those expelled in 1955.

This "homogenization" was far from enabling them to re-establish democracy in their ranks. It is well known that in order to defend itself from constantly emerging oppositions, the "Lambert group," which had become a pure and simple clique, had to constantly harden its bureaucratic regime, transforming itself into a sect of impotent barking dogs, whirling dervishes of the Transitional Program transformed into a prayer wheel,

phobic anti-Stalinists... but as in the style FO and elsewhere factotums of the worst reformist leaderships.

However, as early as 1955, the fate of Lambertism was clearly seen by the Bolshevik Leninist group composed of those expelled in March. In their name, Favre-Bleibtreu wrote a study on the future of Trotskyism which was published in issue No. 2 of their organ, Trotskyisme. There we can read: "In the Boussel (Lambert) group, revisionism is taking a more traditional, more pragmatic form, and one that in the final analysis is more complete (than that of Pabloism). The main memory that it retains of its adherence to Trotskyism is a vocabulary, a purely verbal reflex, void of any content.... At this stage of degeneration we can say that not only is this group not Trotskyist, but it is not even a political group. This brings us back to the old problem of pre-Marxist economism which Marx combatted his whole life long, and which Lenin condemned in 1902."

After noting the monstrous errors of Lambertism which we have explained above, the document concluded: "This is the political death agony of ex-Trotskyist militants disarmed and demoralized by the Pabloist betrayal. Left without a compass, they are running around in a phantom world, jumping from opportunism to adventurism, without ever managing to escape from the infernal swamp."

Unfortunately, this death agony has been prolonged for more than twenty years.

As for Pabloism, it could only be defeated from within the international, and it was in this arena that it was beaten. In this struggle, Lambertism served only to mislead and demoralize hundreds of militants. Once Pabloism was politically defeated, logic would have required that the OCI take up a struggle for a new phase of reunifying the international. The fact that to the contrary, the Lambertists stepped up their struggle against the international once again is another sign of the irreversibility of its degeneration.

Lambertism thus has no more continuity with Trotskyism and the Fourth International than the fact of its origins. Its only political continuity is with the trade unionist-economist revisionist course that emerged after the 1952 split.

The Meaning of the Degeneration

Splits are not congenital maladies, as certain petty-bourgeois sociologists would have it, and this is no more true of Trotskyism than it is of Leninism. In the workers movement, splits as well as regroupments are the objective manifestation of the evolution of the consciousness of the class itself. In periods of upsurge, regroupments predominate over splits; the inverse is true in periods of retreat and defeat. The 1950s were years of defeat in France, during which the workers offensive ended every time in failures that left the workers movement at a lower level than its previous point of departure.

In this dark period, the Fourth International experienced the worst setback in its history. It was struck at its weakest point -- in its international leadership, a numerically small group of men who lacked any class base or roots. But conversely, the Lambertist degeneration shows that an initial base in the working class, limited to a single country by the "caudilloism" of its leadership, and restricted to a small number of men is quite insufficient as a guarantee of political stability on a correct line. In small formations, the particular faults of the leaders take on a disproportionate importance. In other words, the smaller the organization is in history, the greater the role of personality. These dangers throw a light on some of the lesser known reasons why Trotsky insisted on proclaiming the Fourth International in apparently the least favorable conditions. It was to counterbalance the weaknesses of each national Trotskyist group by enabling them to keep a check on each other and test their politics in the light of the most diverse experiences. At the end of the Second World War, the very fact of the existence of the international made it possible to correct the errors that a number of national groups had committed in the harshest isolation. A second time, in the decade 1953-63, it was the physical existence of the International that made it possible to achieve a correction of its political and theoretical course, and then a regroupment paving the way for new and unprecedented growth.

The refusal of the Lambertists to place any confidence in the body of Trotskyists throughout the world has been the clearest sign of their degeneration. Given the general weakness of the international, the appearance of a deviation at the top level could not fail to have the grave consequences that Pabloism in fact had in the years 1951-52. On the other hand, the Fourth International would really have been condemned as a program and as an organizational perspective if there had been no reaction against this revisionism. There was such a reaction; it took various forms and made possible the 1963 reunification. The "Lambertist group", was caught up in the entanglements of its own opportunist moves. Shaken by their errors -- which became increasingly grave -- the Lambertists responded to every blow by a policy of brutal and hasty organizational measures against those who concluded that it was necessary to make a correction. When their "Algerian" failure opened the eyes of the Lambertist partners in the International Committee, and when Pablo, following his new Third Worldist course, was put into a minority, the reaction of what was to become the OCI was not to make a self-criticism of these gross errors, but to carry out a sectarian hardening up against the reunification of the international.

Doubtless it could not have been otherwise. The Lambertists were too compromised; admission of their error would require them to give up posing as leaders and still more so as heirs of authentic Trotskyism. Furthermore, their compromising actions had transformed them. You cannot be loyal allies of reformist trade-union bureaucrats and outstanding figures of freemasonry for ten years without paying a price. Every step from living Trotskyism increased the need for self-justification by means

of denunciations and even physical attacks that widened the gap still more. A peak was reached in the mobilization of the OCI students, the FER, in May 1968 against the setting up of barricades, which was the initial blow in the most important revolutionary days since 1936. Three years later, what remained in the International Committee after the 1963 reunification split in two. Other explosions were to reduce its purely Lambertist component still further. In a period of revolutionary resurgence, when the vanguard is constantly borne upward by the rising tide, experiencing more regroupments than splits, such a decline is the sign of bankruptcy. The Lambertists can avoid such conclusions only by denying the direction of history and justifying their existence by a pessimism which, in turn, carries them still further from the rising tide. This was clear in Portugal, when their few members threw in their hand with Mario Soares and waged a struggle against everything that stood in the camp of revolution in the name of a defense of democratic gains.

Only they reach a certain point in their evolution, big bureaucratic machines can no longer correct their course. Sects-- which are small bureaucratic machines -- are just as incapable of this. They may survive, like the looniest heretical religious chapels, since they are a psychological crutch for the unbalanced and for certain simplistic mentalities but their political role tends to become insignificant. This is the only future that awaits the OCI.

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