

Anatomy of the Micro-Sect

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Introduction

There is a terminological problem. “Sect” is often used as a cuss-word to mean a group one doesn’t like. “Movement” is often used to describe something that does not exist in organized form; as when “the American socialist movement” is used as an abbreviation for scattered socialist elements that often do not “move” at all. We shall use these terms with more precise meanings. A sect presents itself as the embodiment of the socialist movement, though it is a membership organization whose boundary is set more or less rigidly by the points in its political program rather than by its relation to the social struggle. In contrast, a working-class party is not simply an electoral organization but rather, whether electorally engaged or not, an organization which really is the political arm of decisive sectors of the working class, which politically reflects (or refracts) the working class in motion as it is. A “socialist movement” sums up the mass manifestations of a socialist working class in various fields, not only the political, usually around a mass socialist party. For present purposes, the important distinction is between the sect form of organization and a form of organization common in other countries but which does not yet exist in this backward country.

This approach is basic to the paper, for essentially it deals with the question: Is there an alternative to the sect mode of organization which dominates the whole history of American socialism, past and present?

H.D.

About the Road to an American Socialist Movement

Since there are socialists in America but no socialist movement, it is understandable that the socialists will say, “Let us go and form a socialist movement.” All considerations argue for this obvious step, and there are no arguments against it: except one. This is the fact – historical fact – that no one can decide to “make” a revolution. Whatever is formed by fiat will turn out to be a sect alongside the other sects, even if it is that better kind of sect which believes in not being sectarian.

Let us make clear from the outset that we do not have the answer to the \$64 question, viz., a formula or gimmick which, if only followed, will infallibly produce a party or movement out of the woodwork. We will all have to grope for some time. But we have some conceptions about the direction in which to grope, and the criteria for deciding whether developments are hopeful or hindering.

1 The Road Forward

A socialist movement will become a possibility in this country, as it did in others, as its bases are matured by social-political conditions. If, however, it cannot be created simply by an effort of will, it is also historically true that it is not simply a matter of spontaneous generation. When the bases for a socialist movement mature, it will be difficult for it to come into being unless the nascent movement is crystallized with the help of active socialist elements. Every socialist movement has been the outcome of the fusion of spontaneity and leadership, of naturally developed elements and conscious organization.

This means that, for us American socialists today who look forward to the building of a genuine socialist movement, there is a course we can take which will further this objective and bring it nearer, which will fructify the ground on which it will arise, which will make it easier for its elements to mature from place to place. The alternative to creation-by-fiat is not that we passively wait for it to arise by itself without the intervention of human hands.

It follows that the course taken now by American socialists can also have the opposite effect: of turning off dispositions toward a genuine movement; of sterilizing the ground on which the seeds of the movement might germinate; of making it harder for workers to find their way to a socialist movement-in-the-making.

Unfortunately, it is this latter course which today is dominant among the sects, sectlets, and micro-sects of what passes nowadays as American socialism. The sect form of American socialist groupment today is a roadblock in the way; and the sect notions that are dominant among this groupment constitute a poison which could immobilize and abort a socialist movement even if it got started.

2 Fragmentation

American socialism today has hit a new low in terms of sect fragmentation. There are more sects going through their gyrations at this moment than have ever existed in all previous periods in this country taken together. And the fragments are still fissioning, down to the submicroscopic level. Politically speaking, their average has dropped from the comic-opera plane to the comic-book grade. Where the esoteric sects (mainly Trotskyist splinters) of the 1930s tended toward a sort of super sophistication in Marxism and futility in practice, there is a gaggle of grouplets now (mainly Maoist-Castroite) characterized by amnesia regarding the Marxist tradition, ignorance of the socialist experience, and extreme primitivism. The road to an American socialist movement surely lies over the debris, or around the rotting off-shoots of, this fetid jungle of sects.

To be sure, we recognize that there are sects and sects: we still have with us some sects and sectlets of the “classic” type, i.e., mainly futile and fossilized, as distinct from the new crop of neo-Stalinist (Maoist-Castroite-etc.) sects that represent a more positive danger to any healthy development in the working-class movement. It is characteristic of the latter that they do not want a class movement – not because of some special organization conception but because of their basic political conceptions. Just as their “socialism” is the rule of a state despotism over a bureaucratically collectivized economy, so their organizational road to power is the formation of an elite band of Maximum Leaders which holds itself ready to bestow its own rule, at a propitious moment, on an elemental upsurge of the people. (This is new only in the sense of being a regurgitation, in new forms, of the oldest type of leftist movement, the Jacobin-putschist circles that dominated before the rise of Marxism.)

If these neo-Stalinist sects are “oriented” toward the working class – or toward the lumpenpoor, or the blacks, or the “third world”, etc. – it is only in the sense that men in a hurry orient toward a pack of horses. They make clear that the historical content of “Maoism” in its different varieties is the conception of the bureaucratic revolution-from-above engineered by a band of self-appointed leaders riding on the back of a class movement, and bridling it; for which end, the most suitable class is one with a minimum of capacity for initiative and self-organization, such as a peasantry. These elements are – some for reasons of class makeup, enemies to the revolutionary democracy of socialism.

Hence also these elements need the sect form of organization. For them the sect is not an unfortunate necessity due to the absence of a real movement: it is their movement. Minuscule size may not even be a drawback; for didn’t Castro “make” the revolution with only umpteen good men? ¹ How many commissars are needed on the Long March? This indeed is part of the dynamic behind the current proliferation of sects, since they are not inhibited by the prejudice that a “party” needs much of a rank and file.

3 The Classic Sect

As for the “classic” type of sects still operating: these presently divide more or less into those that stem from the Trotskyist sect tradition and those that exemplify the social-democratic pattern. (To be sure, the Trotskyist grouplets shade off at one end into the neo-Stalinist type, particularly the larger sect called the Socialist Workers “Party”, whose politics has steadily moved since Trotsky’s death in the direction of Stalinization.)

What characterizes the classic sect was best defined by Marx himself: it counterposes its sect criterion of programmatic points against the real movement of the workers in the class struggle, which may not measure up to its high demands. The touchstone of support (the “*point d’honneur*,” in Marx’s words) is conformity with the sect’s current shibboleths – whatever they may be, including programmatic points good in themselves. The approach pointed by Marx was different: without giving up or concealing one’s own programmatic politics in the slightest degree, the real Marxist looks to the lines of struggle calculated to move decisive sectors of the class into action – into movement against the established powers of the system (state and bourgeoisie and their agents, including their labor lieutenants inside the workers’ movement). And for Marx, it is this reality of social (class) collision which will work to elevate the class’s consciousness to the level of the socialist movement’s program.

To move a fighting sector of the class into action against the established powers by only a step is more important than “a thousand programs,” Marx and Engels used to reiterate, and there’s no use denouncing them for deprecating

¹The answer, by the way, is: No, the Cuban revolution made Castro, not vice-versa. But that is another story.

programmatic politics. To the sect mind, their approach is utterly incomprehensible. For over a century now, we have seen the two touchstone; and the difference is as glaring nowadays as it ever was. The most important test has always been the relationship of the self-styled Marxist and the working class organized on the elementary economic level, i.e., the trade-union movement. (The test is all the more decisive in the United States where, unfortunately, the trade-union movement is the only class movement of the workers in existence.)

4 Sects and Trade Unions

The sect-socialist ² has always felt a soul-torn difficulty in the face of a trade-union movement which rejects socialism; and the dominance of sect life in the history of socialism has been accompanied by the predominance of a leftist hostility to trade-unionism as such.

Marx and Engels constituted the first socialist school to hold a position supporting trade-unionism as such (while critical of given policies, leaders, etc., of course). And after their time, socialist history divides mainly between the social-democratic types who supported reformist trade-unionism precisely because they were themselves reformist rather than Marxist, and the would-be revolutionary socialists who found “revolutionary” arguments for returning to the old crap of socialist anti-trade-unionism – with the addition of Marxist rhetorical to dress up their sectist approach. Very few so-called or self-styled Marxists have understood the heart of Marx’s approach to proletarian socialism: The basic strategy for building a socialist movement lies in fusing two movements – the class movement for this-or-that step which gets a decisive sector of the class into collision with the established powers of state and bourgeoisie, a collision on whatever scale possible; and the work of permeating this class movement with educational propaganda for social revolution, which integrates the two.

If this has been true in the best days of the Marxist movement to a greater or lesser extent, it took grotesque forms in the recent past of the American left, i.e., during the Sixties when the radical impulse was temporarily coming from non-worker sectors (students and some blacks not rooted in working-class life, for example). ³ The student New Left commonly swallowed the image of Labor dished out by the sociological brainwashers of the academy: “Big Labor” alongside Big Business etc., identification of trade-unionism with George Meany or Hoffa, implicit equation of the trade-union movement with its bureaucracy, organized workers as an ipso-facto “middle class” stratum and part of the Establishment, and the rest of the ideological garbage from the real Establishment’s anti-working-class mind mills.

Even among those New Left elements – the better ones – who oriented toward going to work in factories or plants (“going to the people”), the dominant conception was that trade unions as such had to be replaced with more “radical” formations of shop organization which would somehow be outside the trade-union structure without being a dual trade union. These conceptions either remained in the realm of fantasy while making it impossible for their holders to integrate themselves into the real movement as trade-union militants, or (worse) were acted out destructively in certain places, bringing harm to the workers and discredit to the radicals. Nowhere did the New Left impulse into the factories eventuate in a more or less well-rooted movement of militants inside the trade-union movement that could really offer opposition to the established bureaucracy: this is its indictment.

The sectist approach to the class movement showed its pointed ears in many ways that need illustration. Here are two.

Item. The student radical, heart filled with sympathy for poor workers, turns to the Farm Workers’ struggle as one clearly meriting his support. Typically he does not “go to the people” by going to work in the fields like other workers; for should his special talents be buried under a clod? He goes to work “for the union”, i.e., as what the union calls a student volunteer. Impressed by his own self-sacrifice on the one hand, on the other he finds that the Farm Workers union scarcely measures up to his ideal of what the class struggle should look like. Pretty soon he complains that the student volunteers “have no say” in policy, i.e., he demands that powers of decision be partly shifted out of the union members’ hands and into those of the alien-class visitors who have deigned to donate their time. Or, finding that the internal life and democracy of the union are far from satisfactory, he may decide that the Farm Workers do not really deserve his support. He would bestow his saving presence only on certified-pure class struggles taking place on a different planetary plane.

Item. The trade-union movement was very behindhand in producing opposition to the Vietnam war, as is well known, while antiwar feeling grew around the campuses. In student circles, the programmatic touchstone for complete opposition to the war came to be the slogan of unilateral withdrawal, which was richly justified. But finally, here and there pockets of antiwar opposition in the trade-union movement did start developing. Eventually a number of the

²We use this awkward term instead of sectarian, which is usually understood to mean one who carries on certain policies. A term is needed for one who bases himself on sect organization, whatever the policies of the sect.

³For a more positive appreciation of the strengths and weaknesses of the New Left, see the collection **The New Left of the Sixties**, edited by M. Friedman (Independent Socialist Press, 1972).

more socially conscious and progressive labor leaders did screw up courage and founded the Labor Assembly for Peace in the teeth of violent denunciations by the Meany bureaucracy. These beginnings were timid in many respects, and, among other hesitations, stated opposition to the war without specifying the slogan of unilateral withdrawal. We know of no more flagrant example of the sect mentality than the scornful attitude taken by New-Leftists toward this beginning of an organized anti-war opposition in the labor movement. Even in the San Francisco Bay Area, which had the most militant and most wide-open branch of the Labor Assembly for Peace and where leaders of the group if not the group itself openly spoke out for unilateral withdrawal, not one single New-Leftist eligible could be persuaded to taint his soul by having anything to do with a group so backward as to fall short of the unilateral-withdrawal program. The fact that this development represented the first steps of a responsible sector of the trade unions moving into collision with the established powers – this fact meant nothing to the sectists. The only consideration they understood was their soul-saving shibboleth, which they counterposed to the real initiation of class motion.

5 The Rut We Are In

Such is the road of the sect. How to get out of that rut? There are two notions that try to remedy the ills of sectism by broadening the sect. The intention is good; the remedy impractical.

One is the proposal to abolish sectarianism by a call for the unity of all the sects. This may also be presented as a road to forming a socialist “movement”. It is a piteous illusion. In practice, it may mean a spate of unity negotiations among some of the sects (a common time-killing enterprise), or even a unification or two (a drop out of the bucket). But the actual unification of all the sects is an inherent impossibility where the programmatic shibboleths on which the sects are based are politically incompatible. The product of sect unification turns out to be nothing but a somewhat larger sect, as long as the conditions for a genuine socialist movement do not obtain. The idea of an “all-inclusive” sect is a will o’ the wisp.

Incompatible political programs can be held together, at least for a historical period, within the framework of a party/movement; for the cement which holds such a formation together is its role in the class struggle itself, the fact that it is the class-in-movement; what holds the antagonistic political tendencies in place is the pressure of the class enemies outside. As long as this is not the real situation of the movement, nothing else can take its place, including exhortations against “sectarianism”.

The second proposal is one that aims at the same result by a different route: viz., launching a sect whose distinguishing programmatic point is that it will voluntarily eschew distinguishing programmatic points. This is to be achieved by limiting the program to some minimum socialist (or radical) basis on which “everyone” can agree, i.e., a statement of abstract socialism. If a left wing wants to push the group to a revolutionary position, like “No support to Democrats,” the minimum is exploded; in practice, therefore, the program must be reformist. The Socialist Party has wanted to be this kind of sect most of the time since it ceased to be a mass movement; and more recently the New American Movement has set out to concretize this aim in some still unclear form.

Sometimes the aim is derived by reminiscence from the different historical period (before 1917) when the Socialist Party was a congeries of different political views which were not yet consciously understood to be basically antagonistic and whose consequences had not yet been acted out. But we cannot simply pass a motion to go back to the Debs era.

As long as the life of the organization (whether or not labeled “party”) is actually based on its politically distinctive ideas, rather than on the real social struggles in which it is engaged, it will not be possible to suppress the clash of programs requiring different actions in support of different forces. The key question becomes the achievement of a mass base, which is not just a numerical matter but a matter of class representation. Given a mass base in the social struggle, the party does not necessarily have to suppress the internal play of political conflict, since the centrifugal force of political disagreements is counterbalanced by the centripetal pressure of the class struggle. Without a mass base, a sect that calls itself a party cannot suppress the divisive effect of fundamental differences on (for example) supporting or opposing capitalist parties at home in the shape of liberal Democrats and such, or supporting or opposing the maneuvers of the “Communist” world.

6 What Then?

If the road of the sect is a blind alley, what then?

The road of the sect has always been a blind alley; yet socialist movements have come into existence.

There has never been a single case of a sect which developed into, or gave rise to, a genuine socialist movement – by the only process that sects know, the process of accretion. The sect mentality typically sees the road ahead as one in which the sect (one’s own sect) will grow and grow, because it has the Correct Political Program, until it

becomes a large sect, then a still larger sect, eventually a small mass party, then larger, etc., until it becomes large and massy enough to impose itself as the party of the working class in fact. But in two hundred years of socialist history, this has never actually happened, in spite of innumerable attempts.

This is no proof that it will never happen in the unforeseeable future. But it is proof that there must be some other road to the formation of a genuine socialist movement which is not the road of the sect.

This road has been will-nigh totally forgotten in the general “sectification” of socialist circles in our period. the slightest acquaintance with Marx’s view of what is to be done to build a socialist movement is enough to remind that Marx was violently and unconditionally hostile to anything resembling a sect. Not only did he never try to organize a Marxist sect, but he positively scorned those who did.

It is less easily understood that Lenin never wanted to form a sect and never did do so, and that the Bolshevik party was not the result of a sect formation that grew by accretion. When Lenin came out of exile in 1900 and went abroad to begin the struggle to permeate the existing socialist circles with the ideas of revolutionary Marxism, he never thought to set up an ideological grouplet of his own, a sect, even though the Russian socialists in exile were already divided into sects (which were already splitting, etc.).

What Lenin helped to launch was a Marxist political center in a non-sect form, in the form of a periodical manned by an editorial board, **Iskra**.

The political center itself educated for full revolutionary Marxism. At the same time, the party/movement it called for was an all-inclusive socialist party in which the revolutionary Marxist center would constitute one tendency, hopefully eventually dominant. Both sides of the picture conditioned each other: “Before we can unite, and in order that we may unite, we must first of all firmly and definitely draw the lines of demarcation between the various groups [tendencies],” wrote Lenin on launching *Iskra*. But the lines of demarcation were not to be drawn along sect lines, with organizational walls bounding them: this was the sect course which he did not follow.

Iskra was not merely a “literary” enterprise: this is a misunderstanding. A worker in Russia became an “**Iskraist**” insofar as he agreed with the political views of that political center; and as an “**Iskraist**” he himself became a political center for further spreading those views in the popular circles in which he worked, in his factory, in his village, in his socialist circle. One of the views spread by this political center was that the party/movement to be built should be a broad one. Lenin never gave up this conception of how to build a socialist movement at any time before the October Revolution. It was on the basis of this conception that the Leninist party actually evolved.

We do not propose either the Russian movement or Lenin’s course as the model for America in the 1970s. The significance of the case is different. On the other hand, it is many of the sects that believe they are following in Lenin’s footsteps in building a hard sect on the basis of a shibboleth-program. They are wrong because in this belief they have merely internalized what they have been told of the nature of “Leninism” by the anti-Bolshevik industry of the American establishment. On the other hand, the case of Lenin’s road to a revolutionary party is important because he applied it uniquely. His unique course was to be serious and uncompromising about maintaining a revolutionary Marxist political center as the instrument of permeating the whole movement with its ideas, and insisting that majorities so gained be recognized by the whole movement. It was the right wing that split.

We do maintain that the alternative to the sect road which is suggested by the successes and failures of socialist history is also suggested by generalizing from Lenin’s **Iskra** model as well as from a dozen other cases of the building of real socialist movements in various contexts and circumstances.

7 The Political Center

What should be done to prepare the ground for the eventual formation of a socialist movement/party in America, that is, a mass-based socialist formation which is the political expression of the working class moving toward a collision with the established powers of capitalist society?

We first address ourselves to the individual socialist who wonders what he or she should and can do other than join the sect of his choice and waste his energies in the vicissitudes of sect life:

You have the opportunity for undertaking a two-sided socialist enterprise keyed to your own circumstances. We suggest the following double-barreled liaison for you, both sides of which are necessary for the whole thing to be meaningful.

(1) Your basic contribution to the eventual formation of a socialist movement is what you do to develop a socialist circle around you where you are now. We are thinking in the first place of your role in the work-place (factory, office, school, or whatever).

First things first: what the American working-class movement needs first of all is the crystallization of an organized militant opposition in the trade unions, because this is the existing class movement of the workers and the only one.

It would be a sad sectarian mistake to think of this as a “radical” or socialist opposition, even though it will inevitably be powered mostly by radicals and socialists of sorts, and also inevitably lead its militants to think in radical and socialist terms. What is needed is a broad progressive wing of the labor movement. In Marxist terms, this is adequately defined as a wing which advocates class-struggle unionism as against business unionism, whether it defines itself in “class struggle” language or not. From the point of view of the worker, there is a felt need to carry on a militant union fight without getting “mixed up” with socialism and reds. From the point of view of the socialist, the organization of a militant opposition to the union establishment sets up an elementary school of class-struggle socialism. One of its consequences, for example, is bound to be the politicalization of the trade-union movement: its entry into independent political action, which depends in turn on breaking up its attachment to Democratic Party politics.

This opposition movement must be a loyal opposition. That means: loyal to the interests of trade-unionism in the same degree that it fights the boss and the bureaucrat, whose power is not in the interests of trade-unionism. It is necessary to proclaim this today – to put it on the banner, so to speak – because the sect radicals have been so successful in discrediting themselves before conscientious trade-unionists, and confusing “radical trade-unionism” with a sect’s commando raids to rip off a plant situation by a display of “militancy” even if the workers’ interests are harmed, or the union work is wrecked, as long as a couple of members are recruited to the sect. The sectists who operate in unions and plants to subordinate the workers’ interests to their sect-advertising adventures and sorties are enemies of the working class and of socialism, not merely “misguided radicals” who are to be chided in Marxistical editorials. They are not “adventuristic” allies of our camp in the class struggle; they are wreckers who cannot always be distinguished from police provocateurs. Any militant opposition movement in the trade unions which makes alliances with such elements will deserve its fate.

If you are in regular contact with a number of people – in the work-place or some other “mass” situation – whom you are trying to influence in a socialist direction, then you are doing something. What the future socialist movement needs is a network of informal socialist circles – or formal ones if you will – which have an integral relation to the real struggles people are carrying on.⁴

The same goes for the black movement, the women workers’ movement, the student movement, etc.

You may be accustomed to the belief that only members of a sect are interested in such work. That is not so. There are innumerable cases where such cells of militancy have sprung up in work-place, office or school around people who are not even socialists, or do not know they are.

What is true is that membership in a sect has often been the stimulus to undertaking this role, through group pressure and guidance, and that the sect performs the service of providing reading and study materials, etc., for the circle activity. This does point to the positive side of sect work, which we cannot deny. What this means is that socialist efforts along these lines need the assistance of a political center of some sort, to which one can look for literature, advice and help. Moreover, there soon arises the need for separate individual and circle efforts to be linked up.

(2) But the role of a political center need not be carried by a sect.

Historically, this job has been done most often and most successfully by a paper or other publication of a socialist political center which is organized simply as an editorial board or other editorial enterprise. (**Iskra** was only one of dozens of examples of how this was done as socialist movements came into existence all over the world.) Historically, also, political centers of this sort have frequently undertaken organizing functions as their influence spread, the organizing being the product or by-product of the work of its agents and representatives. (**Iskra** agents were the organizing arms of the first Leninist center.) The point would be utterly lost if these enterprises were to be considered merely literary enterprises in the usual bourgeois sense. There is a continuous line which has carried such political centers from their function as producers of “literature” to their role as centers for the stimulation of organization in one form or another.

Such political centers are operating today in this country, alongside the proliferating sects, and often quite effectively. Naturally, it is a question of political centers with widely varying political complexions, most of them distasteful to our own views and to each other’s. We mention them not to celebrate their work but to exhibit alternatives to the sect road.

The **Guardian** and Sweezy’s **Monthly Review** have functioned more or less as political centers emerging from a neo-Stalinist tendency of one kind or another. (Indeed, the **Guardian** is now involved with a brace of neo-Stalinist sects in talking up the formation of a Maoist “party” out of their unification.) On the right wing social-democratic

⁴Instead of the proliferation of sect-type groups, we should like to see a proliferation of open socialistic clubs, discussion circles, forums, and similar loose and unpretentious aggregations which are formed around work-place situations by people engaged in common work. These would be among the nuclei around which a real socialist movement could crystallize, given favorable conditions. We freely recognize that favorable conditions do not obtain now, especially since the sectists would be eager to crush such hopeful developments in their lethal embrace.

side, the clique of litterateurs around Dissent functions as the only political center for that tendency that exists outside of George Meany's offices.

These examples differ in the amount of attention they pay, or have paid at other times, to the function of relating to their readers (followers) in the field. For our present purposes we wish only to stress that a political center does not have to be a sect. More: a political center can undertake a relationship with its followers which is not bedeviled by the rigid requirements of organizational life, its life-and-death votes, faction fights, splits, internal disputes, and ingrown rituals of imitating a miniature or micro-"mass party".

From the point of view of the individual socialist who wants to "do something", we would summarize our suggestion as follows:

(1) Crystallize a circle of co-thinkers around you wherever you are, in the course of your activity in the arena of the social struggle that goes along with your situation. You are the smallest-unit political center there is.

(2) Make contact with a political center that makes sense from your own point of view, for help in literature, advice, and outside linkups, and work with it to whatever extent you find useful. But there is no reason against having this relationship with more than one political center, if they suit your own political views. Such a political center may even be a sect; but if you do not join it, it relates to you only as one political center among others. This relationship is a hang-loose relationship: if you do not have a vote in deciding its affairs, it is likewise true that it cannot tell you what to do by exerting its sect "discipline" over your own judgment. You do not erect an organizational barrier between you as the adherent of one sect and someone else who cleaves to another sect or none. In your work, you use whatever literature you wish, whatever their source. You will use your money not for the sect's fund drives but to finance your own work. If enough take this course to break up the sect system, that would be a good thing for the future potentialities of an American socialist movement.

There is a better chance of a genuine socialist movement arising out of such a hang-loose complex of relationships than out of the fossilized world of the sects. We are not under the impression that a very large number of individuals are going to start tomorrow by following the course we have described above. We have been interested so far simply in illustrating the way in which socialist movements have arisen elsewhere – the only way, in broad outline. We have sketched the kind of development which provides an alternative to the sect mode of organization which is driving American socialism into the ground.

Very likely, whatever will actually happen in this country will happen somewhat differently – as usual. If the springing up of socialist circles is not happening on a mass scale, it is also true that there is no other direction visible in which the emergence of a mass socialist movement is just around the corner. All one can do is push in a direction in which one's efforts will not be wasted, no matter what the outcome. The only thing we are sure of is that the road of the sect is a dead end.

The Independent Socialist Committee is itself an effort to establish a political center for our current of revolutionary Marxism: the view that the workers of all countries constitute the class base of a Third Camp which must fight and destroy both the capitalist system and "Communist" bureaucratic collectivism if the revolutionary democracy of a socialist world is to be established. It begins as an editorial board for the production of books and pamphlets (not yet a periodical) embodying the case for this world outlook. In this way we are exemplifying our own advice.

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Note on the text

This paper was originally drafted when the quarterly journal **New Politics** was planning to run a symposium on the question of how to rebuild a socialist movement in America. The editors of **New Politics** chose not to include this piece in the symposium. Later (1973) I revised the text somewhat, and it was circulated privately.