

**THE
SOCIALIST
WORKERS
PARTY:
AN
OBITUARY**

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No. 353, 27 April 1984

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Introduction

In recent years the reformist Socialist Workers Party (SWP) of Jack Barnes has bureaucratically purged and driven out some hundreds of its members, particularly and disproportionately those whose allegiance to the SWP goes back to the "old days" before Barnes. This final destruction of the human links to the old party of Leon Trotsky and James P. Cannon takes place some 20 years after the decisive shift of the SWP off a revolutionary axis, a shift which had as its necessary organizational handmaiden the political expulsion from the party of the Revolutionary Tendency. The RT fought inside the SWP against the abandonment of the Trotskyist program and after its expulsion in 1963 founded the Spartacist League to carry forward the programmatic integrity and democratic-centralist traditions of Trotskyism in this country.

The main article reprinted here, "Barnes Axes Last Veterans of the Old SWP," recounts the inside story of the recent mass purge whereby Barnes and his coterie rid themselves of virtually everyone who remembered the old party and still maintained a sentimental attachment to the old Trotskyism, 20 years after the SWP's pretensions to Trotskyism had been emptied of real programmatic content. The article places the recent expulsions in the context of the decisive destruction of SWP party democracy by the Farrell Dobbs regime in the 1960s, centrally in the expulsion of the Revolutionary Tendency solely for its expressed political views and in the formalization of that expulsion in the 1965 organizational resolution, "The Organizational Character of the Socialist Workers Party," which introduced the self-serving elastic standard of "disloyalty" and effectively banned real factional rights in the party. Without a grasp of this crucial juncture of SWP history, those seeking belatedly to understand the new purge are groping in the dark.

We are reprinting here as well, with heavy excerpting, the article which we published immediately following Barnes' public speech in December 1982, in which Barnes came out of the closet as an anti-Trotskyist to vilify and belittle Trotsky's revolutionary role and particularly his theory of "permanent revolution." This speech was the last straw for many of the party veterans. Our article brings together some of the key quotations from Lenin and Trotsky which can serve as a guide for further study of the theory of permanent revolution as a central theoretical acquisition of the experience of the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 and the development of the Left Opposition in the fight against the counterrevolutionary ideology of Stalinist degeneration.

As appendices to this pamphlet, we are reprinting two appeals of expulsion from the SWP. The first, the 1963 Revolutionary Tendency statement "Rescind the Suspensions!", reproduced from the first issue of *Spartacist*, documents the SWP's destruction of the democratic-centralist norms upheld for 35 years by the American Trotskyist movement, precisely in order to muzzle revolutionary opposition to the SWP's search for substitutes for a revolutionary working-class perspective. The second appendix is the 1984 "Appeal of Expulsion" by George Breitman, one of Barnes' new expellees and a veteran of many decades in the SWP. Comrade Breitman is not associated with the Spartacist tendency and stands at a considerable distance from us programmatically. Nonetheless we think our readers will find his document of interest in showing the intimate link between Barnes' explicitly anti-Trotskyist public speech in December 1982 and his organizational "final solution" for the party veterans who recoiled from spitting on the watchwords of their revolutionary youth.

—29 May 1984

reprinted from *Workers Vanguard* No. 353, 27 April 1984

From Reformist Betrayals to Overt Repudiation of Trotskyism

Barnes Axes Last Veterans of the Old SWP

Jack Barnes has now dispatched the last ghost of his party's claims to represent the continuity of the old Socialist Workers Party (SWP) which once embodied Trotskyism in this country. Earlier this year Barnes and his traveling hatchetman Barry Sheppard

polished off the remainder of a large crop of SWP oppositionists by a massive "re-registration" purge of the residual, mainly rank-and-file, supporters of two expelled minority currents, whose main spokesmen had already been purged earlier.

This mass purge over last Christmas/New Year's leaves Barnes' party free to float off into soft-core Stalinism and irrelevance while hundreds of recent ex-members grope around disunitedly in a mainly social-democratic direction; and some are even seeking to be Trotskyists, as they understand it. The Barnesites, by their own count, have rid themselves of more than 150 dissidents in the last three years ("List of Splitters," *SWP Party Organizer*, Volume 8, No. 1, January 1984). Among the recently departed are just about everyone left from the old days of the Trotskyist SWP; we can think only of Art Sharon and George Novack (Harry Ring doesn't count) as party veterans who may now remain in Barnes' party.

The important political question of the SWP's "Trotskyism" was settled programmatically and organizationally two decades ago. But it wasn't until December 1982 that Barnes dotted the i's and crossed the t's when he explicitly attacked the theory of "permanent revolution" and belittled the revolutionary stature of Leon Trotsky, in classically Stalinist terms. Upon the death last year of Farrell Dobbs, Barnes' predecessor as head of the SWP, the Barnesites crowed in their Dobbs memorial meetings over the "continuity" of the SWP—from Lenin straight to Dobbs and Barnes, thereby excising Trotsky and SWP founder and leader James P. Cannon from SWP history. Barnes had been moving increasingly overtly toward dumping the SWP's lip-service to Trotskyism. To finish the job required the ouster of the last vestiges of the cadre of the old party, who resisted the invitation to spit on the watchwords of their revolutionary youth.

While we enjoy an opponent's faction fight as much as anybody, there's no joy in it for us when an SWPer is expelled for a poem she wrote, another for falling



James P. Cannon, the founding leader of American Trotskyism.

Pathfinder Press

asleep in a Militant forum (anyone who's ever attended one can sympathize with this comrade's breach of "discipline"). Even by established Barnesite standards, very special savagery has been dished out to the veterans of the old party: e.g., the obscene treatment of James Kutcher, "the legless veteran," whose ten-year fight against government witchhunters in the 1940s and 1950s was backed by significant sections of the labor movement. Now little old ladies who were SWP members for 50 years are being turned out of SWP "public" forums by open threats of goon violence.

In 1982 the resident anti-Trotskyist expert of the rad-lib Stalinist *Guardian*, John Trinkl, gloatingly observed that the SWP "has been quietly dropping overboard some of its Trotskyist baggage" (*Guardian*, 14 July 1982). To free himself up for whatever Barnes thinks is out there waiting for him, he had to get rid not just of the "baggage" but of anyone who still wanted to tote it, even if they'd long since lost the keys to the suitcases. Barnes has spit out the SWP old-timers because they remain sentimental about Trotskyism.

This purge has been squarely on the agenda for Barnes' party since the surfacing of dreaded factionalism in the SWP prior to the party's 1981 national convention. Factional struggle in the SWP is a contradiction in terms, and has been since the mid-1960s; the bureaucratization of the party was the necessary organizational handmaiden of its qualitative shift off a revolutionary axis.

In 1963 the Revolutionary Tendency, forerunner of the Spartacist League, was purged from the SWP in the midst

of a sharp political struggle. The RT was purged solely for "disloyalty"—i.e., for our political views—without the slightest evidence of indiscipline. As the purge stood flatly in conflict with the 35-year tradition of American Trotskyism, the Dobbs regime needed new organizational rules after the fact: Dobbs' 1965 organizational resolution which effectively prohibited factional rights in the party. We will return to this point later.

1981 Pre-Convention Discussion: "100 Flowers" Sprout

Under the post-1965 bureaucratic "norms" of the SWP, about the only "loophole" left for organized critics is the pre-convention discussion, a three-month period prior to national conventions, which are mandated for every two years. In the 1981 pre-convention discussion, Barnes found himself with two sizable minorities on his hands: the West Coast-based "Trotskyist Tendency" of Nat Weinstein and Lynn Henderson and what became the "Fourth Internationalist Caucus" of Steve Bloom, Frank Lovell and George Breitman. Underlying the appearance of this virtual "hundred flowers campaign" in Barnes' party was an intimation of irrelevance. The SWP was shrinking fast as an organizationally sectarian reformist party with no stable "niche," having been eclipsed evidently decisively

ly by Mike Harrington's Democratic Socialists (DSA), which has the numbers, the influential pals among the labor union tops and the consistent "anti-Stalinist" ideology to be the "left wing of the possible" particularly under the conditions of Carter/Reagan's resurgent anti-Soviet war drive.

The two SWP minority groupings emerged mainly in opposition to Barnes' idiotic union policy of "talking socialism" on the job and in opposition to the SWP's shift, in the mid/late 1970s, toward totally slavish adulation of the Castroite (Stalinist) regime in Cuba. The emergence in Poland of the anti-socialist power bid of Solidarność sharply highlighted the eccentricity of Barnes' efforts to simultaneously pursue a niche as a "respectable," "peaceful-legal" party of nativist American reformism while posturing as a partisan of "Soviet surrogates" like the Cuban state. Solidarność, the Polish "company union" for the CIA, Western bankers and the Vatican, presented the consummate opportunity for social-democrats to become more at one with the "free trade unionism" Cold Warriors who have run the American unions since the 1950s. When Fidel Castro came out in support of the suppression of Solidarność' power bid, it threw the SWP's dilemma into sharp relief.

Over Poland, both the Weinstein and Breitman oppositions argued for more

Jack Barnes; page from SWP internal bulletin celebrates mass purge of oppositionists.

WV Photo



Appendix I: List of Splitters

Birmingham Judith A. Robin D.	Houston David Rossi	Elias R. Larry S.	Sandy O. Linda Ray Joe R. Ann R. Karen Schriebe Michael Schreiber Carole Seligman Roland Sheppard Shannon Sheppard Margery Y. Nat Weinstein Sylvia Weinstein
Boston Joseph A. David Keil Art L. Roger S. Dave W.	Iron Range Anne Teasdale Zukowski	Oakland Phyllis C. Carl Finamore May May Gong Morgan Hann Vjeh Jeff Mackler Don Mahoney Eather P. Hayden Perry Alice S. Dave S.	San Jose Bill Leumer
Brooklyn Naomi Allen Peter Atwood Steve Bloom Frank Lovell Sarah Lovell James M. Evan Siegel George Weissman	Los Angeles Andrea B. Dave Cooper Lillian C. Leslie Evans Leo Frumkin Sherry Frumkin Max G. Sheavy Goldman Milton Genecia Thelma Genecia Edmund K. Walter Lippmann Jim O. Kathleen O. Marc Rich Evelyn Sell Jack S. Ann S. Mirt S. Alma S. Bob S.	Philadelphia Haskell B. Naomi B. Stephen M. Grace M.	Seattle Rita S.
Chicago Steven Ashby George Bailey Robert B. Tina B. Larry Cooperman Rod Eastman Norrie Gutekunst Judy H. Michael Kramer Vinnie L. Debby P. John P. Patrick Quinn Adam S.	Manhattan Alan Benjamin Lita Blanc Dorothea Breitman George Breitman Pedro Canego Cliff C. Debby G. Penny H. James Kutcher Berta L. Ray M. Jim M. Louis P. Brian S. Paul Siegel Michael S. Dave W.	Pittsburgh Dianne Reelley Paul LeBlanc Carole M. Tom T.	Tucson Rob R.
Cleveland Glenn Campbell George C. Sophie C. Dean C. Joanna M. Shirley Pasholk Andy Pollack Dennis S. Jean Tussey	Newark Gerry Foley	Salt Lake City Shawn G. Kenneth C. Morgan Millie P.	Twin Cities Melanie Benson Cindy B. Jake Cooper Greg Cornell Harry Deboer Gillian Furst Lynn Henderson Mary Henderson Catherine K. Bill Onasch Christine Frank Onasch Bill Peterson Gary P. Dave Riehle Karl S. Ralph Schwartz Gayle Swann Dan Y. Mike Zukowski
Dallas Gene Lantz		San Francisco Byron Ackerman Bob C. Paul Coblin Kate Curry Nancy E. Ralph Forsyth Laura H. Asher H. Ruth H. Don Harmon Mark H. Ann Menasche	Washington D.C. Jay Fisher
			At Large Stephanie Coontz George S. Alan Wald

fulsome and more active support to Solidarność, while Barnes remained queasy about joining with the reactionary "captive nations" crowd in the streets the way that Weinstein did in California. On Cuba, the dissidents fervently quoted the orthodox disclaimers in the SWP's earlier documents on Castroism; a left critique was made of the Barnesites' transparent bid for a franchise from Sandinista Nicaragua. Sensible criticisms were also made of the SWP's continuing prostration before the ayatollah Khomeini's Islamic dictatorship in Iran, a position formerly shared by virtually every current on the left (except us of course) but eventually shelved in embarrassment by all of them save Barnes' weird party.

Barnes' crazy notions of trade-union work—the "talking socialism" campaign—provided more common ground for the would-be trade-union opportunists of the Weinstein grouping and older cadres like Frank Lovell, who had been trade-union director on behalf of Barnes but retained enough upper spinal column from the old days to know that six months on the job does not make anyone a credible workers leader. Lovell also took exception to the utterly contemptuous way that old-timers were being treated around SWP headquarters, a harbinger of Barnes' plans for explicit revision of the SWP's formal Trotskyism.

The minorities took full advantage of the pre-convention discussion "loop-hole" and the result was a full-fledged "hundred flowers" movement which bloomed more than two dozen internal discussion bulletins in the three months prior to the August 1981 national convention. At the convention the two oppositions, politically somewhat interpenetrated and both generally rightist in programmatic coloration, were substantial enough to generate significant proportional representation ("PR") in delegate voting, despite the standard SWP procedures aimed at trimming minority "PR." The minorities, who acted in concert at the convention, were then faced with the problem of getting back in step with SWP "norms." We hazarded the modest opinion that Barnes would close the "loop-hole" by purging his critics prior to the next convention.

After the 1981 convention, the Lovell/Bloom people dissolved to show their loyalty. The West Coast crew however thought to try to maintain rights as a tendency, such rights being worse than murky in the SWP. Both groups soon found themselves grist for the inexorable Barnesite meatgrinder.

**Revolutionary
Tendency
comrades, purged
from SWP solely
for their ideas,
published first
issue of Spartacist
in early 1964.**

SPECIAL 16 PAGE ISSUE

Left Wing Views Kennedy Assassination . . . page 8

Toward Rebirth of the Fourth International . . . page 11

SPARTACIST

NUMBER 1

FEBRUARY-MARCH 1984

10 CENTS

WITCH HUNT IN THE SWP

The National Committee of the Socialist Workers Party expelled five members of the party's left wing minority at a plenum in New York City at the end of December. The five expelled supporters of the SWP's Peterson, Griffiths, White, Laurence Ireland, and Lynne Harper. The Party Political Committee had suspended them two months earlier on the grounds that a Control Commission which had expressed "disloyal" written opinions privately within their own tendency. The revolutionary party and had become centrist, and party discipline was therefore required within the framework of Majority line and leadership. Mage and White were accused of having also been leaders in a tendency which held or permitted such views. Upon refusing to recant or disassociate themselves from one another, all five were summarily expelled.

Disciplined Acceptance

These expulsions mark a new phase in the thirty-five year history of Trotskyism in the United States. The degeneration of the party in recent years has reached such a point that for the first time in the entire history of the SWP the leadership has used expulsions to rid the party of an internal opposition which disciplined acceptance of the policies imposed by the Majority.

Wide Support

Within the party all oppositional tendencies, dissidents, and critics, totaling more than a quarter of the membership, rallied to the defense of the expelled comrades following the preliminary suspensions. Among

those opposing and protesting the PC action were: Myra Turner Weiss, several times the party's vice-presidential candidate; Arne Swabeck, a founding member of American Trotskyism, together with many other party members such as Jack Wright of Seattle and Wendell Phillips from Southern California; the Washington-Phillips grouping; several party branches including New Haven and Seattle.

Control Commission

Two strong reactions felt in the party are responsible for this outpouring of support from the most diverse and politically antagonistic sections of the party. One response was indignation at the exclusion of comrades accused of having "disloyal attitudes." Intensifying this feeling was widespread disgust with the means which were and must be used in to grant even the formality of a trial. The expulsions took place following a so-called investigation led by Control Commission member Anna Chester, wife of a PC her fanatical belief in the party leadership. The investigators first demanded access to private minority draft documents and correspondence. Under extreme protest RT supporters complied with these demands. Apperception proceeded to call in young and new comrades for tape-recorded interrogation sessions in the rooms of the party national office. The youth were asked to admit and Menshevism. Failing to win such admissions, investigators then turned to questioning which was clumsily designed to entrap the young comrades into involuntary confessions of guilt.

(Continued on Page 3)

Continuing show trials of erring old-timers were followed by the "six day war" National Committee plenum (February-March 1982) featuring dozens of motions aimed at forcing minority supporters to "cease and desist" from any "unauthorized" political discussion or collaboration. The internal bulletin issued to bring this home to the membership had to be priced at \$8.00 to fit it all in.

The whole nasty business flowed straight from the 1965 organizational resolution, whose central syllogism can be put quite simply: 1. factions are permitted in the SWP, 2. factionalists are disloyal people, 3. disloyal people are expelled. The resolution sets out the majority's right to "regulate" internal discussion to preclude any kind of private deliberations among oppositional members. Therefore any effort to collaborate politically with cothinkers inside the party makes you a "faction" (or a "secret faction"). And so it came down on Weinstein/Henderson and Lovell/Bloom: organized tendencies may not communicate "behind the back" of the party leadership; dissolved minorities may not communicate at all; minority spokesmen placed on the National Committee by "PR" are bound to maintain majority "discipline" toward the ranks (it's rather like the

storied Mafia code of "omerta"); party members are bound by party discipline in the party's own youth organization.

Out of the Closet: Barnes Attacks Trotsky

With his critics muzzled but less pacified than ever, Barnes went over to the frontal political assault in December 1982. At a public meeting in Chicago held in conjunction with the national convention of the SWP's youth group, Barnes explicitly attacked Trotsky as an irrelevant ultraleftist. Barnes also directly challenged the SWP's erstwhile cothinkers abroad, the "United Secretariat" (USec) of Ernest Mandel, by declaring that "80 percent" of the world's ostensible Trotskyists are "hopeless, irreformable sectarians." The SWP did not publish Barnes' "Their Trotsky and Ours" speech until August 1983, when the speech appeared in the SWP's *New International* magazine.

Barnes' declaration in the speech that the SWP would henceforth avoid looking at politics "through permanent revolution eyes" had been preceded by more weaselly thrusts in the same direction, from the SWP "leadership school" where selected Barnesites could learn to read Marx and Engels unspoiled by the later theoretical

conquests of Lenin and Trotsky, to the coy announcement that two volumes of Dobbs' autobiography would be titled *The Trotskyist Years* and *The Transition Years* (transition to what, we inquired). The most explicit precursor to Barnes' speech was Doug Jenness' articles resuscitating the "democratic dictatorship" formula for stagism, which Lenin the revolutionist transcended in his 1917 "April Theses."

Jenness' articles allowed the USec's Mandel to posture as an orthodox Trotskyist against SWP revisionism. But Mandel is himself no less willing than Barnes to dump "Trotskyism" if it stands in the way of perceived opportunity. In 1976, flirting with the idea of a regroupment with the French Parti Socialiste Unifié, Mandel was unambiguous:

"What difference do labels make? If in the political arena we encountered political forces which agreed with our strategic and tactical orientation and which were repulsed only by the historical reference and the name we would get rid of it in 24 hours."

The main difference between Barnes the crude and Mandel the smooth is that the latter is a lot smarter; we bet he'll wait until he has received a serious proposition before he goes and changes the ideological bedsheets. Meanwhile, Mandel is prostituting the Trotskyist opposition to Stalinism in order to ingratiate himself with anti-Soviet social-democracy. The Mandelites—glorifying the counterrevolutionary clerical-nationalists of Solidarność in Poland and denouncing the Soviet authorities for their response to the U.S.' KAL 007 spy plane provocation—serve as the left wing of "free world" anti-Communism in NATO Europe.

By trotting out the tired old Stalinist rationalizations for anti-Trotskyism, Barnes allowed the emergence of some of the SWP critics as born-again centrists, about 20 years late. Barnes' coming out of the closet as an anti-Trotskyist in December 1982 had to be preceded by a good deal of sinister and conspiratorial lining-up activity by the Barnes clique. Approaches have to have been made to individuals, probably to anybody that was anybody in the SWP, belittling Trotsky and hinting at the need for a "new" approach. Those who didn't pick up the cues and failed to smile and sneer in the right places would simply have been placed on a secret enemies list earmarked for later disposition. Making due allowances for the vast difference of scale, it's not very

Militant puts leftist face on SWP's reformist antiwar line with photo featuring slogans for unconditional U.S. withdrawal and for NLF victory. Photo is cropped to avoid showing that placards were signed "Spartacist."



NEW YORK PARADE. Scene along mile-long parade route down Fifth Avenue in New York. When first contingent reached end of route thousands were still waiting to begin march. Official slogan of the parade, which was carried by most marchers, was "Stop the War in Vietnam Now."

different from what Stalin did: those who were already cynical about the program (which was no longer Lenin's, diluted by Zinoviev) were secretly lined up on the need to find a new "main chance," without it being clear what that would be (it became clear as "socialism in one country").

Once us "Robertsonite" troublemakers had been disposed of 20 years ago, the SWP old guard duly embraced Jack Barnes and his boys (like the sadist Sheppard and the despicable Camejo) as their younger generation. The first step for Barnes was to shift the veterans further and further down the corridors of power; a strutting Barnes pontificated about "orderly transition" (we called it the first of several "age purges"). The final step (so far) was the overt attack on Trotsky, with the resistant older comrades made to walk the plank. In between: the slimy cliquist operation, feeling out the cadres, lining up those that were ready, marking out the others for the ax when the time was ripe.



Joe Hansen's death in 1979 was enormously convenient for Barnes. So long as Hansen was active, and in possession of his *Intercontinental Press* apparatus, the SWP retained some basic reflexes of organizational and polemical competence, including the ability to talk out of the "orthodox" side of its mouth on occasion, mostly for foreign consumption. Hansen's operation provided as well a de facto congregating point for some of the more literary-minded of the members with proclivities toward such orthodoxy and an undoubtedly subjectively important safety valve for older members who were feeling increasingly uncomfortable in Barnes' nasty party. That shelter died with Hansen. And Barnes increased the tempo of his conspiracy to shift the SWP away from formal Trotskyism, becoming overt in a qualitative way around "permanent revolution." And it was time for the night of the long knives for the old party veterans. As Coard and Austin are to Maurice Bishop's movement in Grenada,

da, so are Barnes and Sheppard to the SWP of Dobbs/Hansen. We have to wonder whether the Barnesites' despicable refusal to defend Hansen's reputation against the Healyite, slander campaign resuscitated by the sinister Alan Gelfand's organization-busting court suit was due to Barnes' animus at Hansen for keeping Barnes' "theoretical" aspirations of anti-Trotskyism so long in the closet.

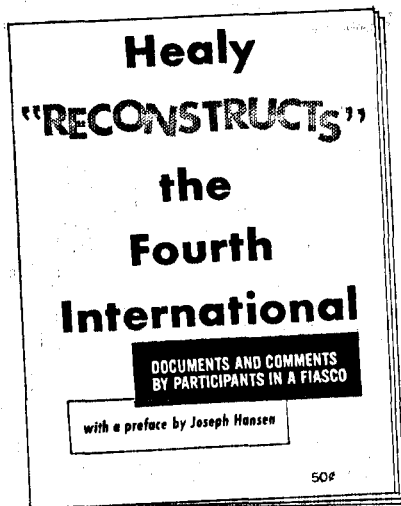
The "Loophole" Becomes a Noose

With the denunciation of Trotsky finally under his belt, Barnes was ready for end-game. The minorities were seething, readying for a stand at the national convention supposed according to SWP statute to be held in August 1983. This was it: Barnes would have to open pre-convention discussion, the last remaining "loophole." So Barnes simply canceled the convention.

The two opposition groupings formed a joint Opposition Bloc going into the National Committee plenum of May 1983; they submitted various minority resolutions, objected to Barnes' cancellation of the convention and sought hopelessly to defend the appeals of a number of those already expelled. This time there was no \$8 bulletin either; instead, the leadership informed the branches that no longer would time be wasted reporting on every last little motion and purge; indeed, an explicit gag rule was imposed to prevent information on the plenum from filtering down. That side of the plenum reports was communicated to the ranks only in August, as Barnes prepared his final moves against the opposition.

In August, as there was no national convention (thus no pre-convention discussion, no discussion bulletins, no delegate elections), an "educational" conference was held instead. A lot of the dissenters were already out and the ones that were left were pretty demoralized. In fact the SWP was an already split party—we reported in our press what happened when the majorityite goons tried as usual to cordon off the Spartacist sales team: a number of older SWP members told their supposed protectors to "leave me alone, I'm just buying a paper." Our literary intervention at the SWP nonconvention included an article on the continuing purge and some long selections from the "Dianne Feeley letter," a protest signed by two expelled Weinstein supporters documenting some organizational aspects of Barnesite internal anti-democracy.

At the post-nonconvention plenum,



Joseph Hansen, polemicist par excellence, exploited Gerry Healy's bureaucratic exclusion of Spartacist delegation from 1966 conference.

the four minority National Committee members dissolved their "Bloc"—and were promptly suspended "unconditionally" as a so-called "secret faction." The Barnesites roasted the minorityites for the presumed "secret discussions" that enabled the two groupings to make and dissolve blocs. You must tell the whole party what your differences are, said Barnes & Co.; if not, your differences can be only over how and when to split the SWP. The four suspended minority spokesmen appealed to Mandel's USec meeting in October 1983, which duly condemned the "escalation of the purge of oppositions" and called on the SWP to reinstate these "members of the Fourth International," while leaving open the question of its own future relations with all parties.

Despite the considerable political

interpenetration in their critiques of Barnes' SWP, the two minority currents were pulled in conflicting immediate directions. Weinstein's people were mainly ultra-parochialists with petty union-bureaucrat aspirations; for them, Fidelismo, "talking socialism" and increasingly the SWP itself had become a hindrance to small-time reformist appetites closer to home. But a lot of Breitman's people were still oriented to the SWP; though they had run out of revolutionary steam two decades ago, they now found themselves fighting a rearguard action in defense of a pretty attenuated centrist version of Trotskyism.

Breitman's people wanted to stay in the SWP and fight the lost battle; failing that, they wanted to continue orienting to the SWP membership as a presence from the outside. Weinstein's people wanted everybody out sooner rather than later, and onward to the so-called "mass movements" led politically by the Democratic Party. If the two tendencies had trouble maintaining a bloc when Barnes was after the both of them with his meat cleaver, could they stick together in the cold world outside? The situation was complicated by the presence of supporters still inside the SWP and by the organizational highhandedness of the Weinstein gang, who because they happened to have a slight majority insisted that the expelled from both wings should be bound by common democratic-centralist discipline.

An uneasy compromise was reached over the formula of "public faction." The formula solves nothing. What is a public faction? How does it describe itself to those outside the SWP? What does it do? The Weinstein bunch put the

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accent on "public" and the others on "faction" and in October "Socialist Action" (SA) was founded by the expelled supporters of both minority components; it was the beginning of a short and rocky remarriage of the former "Opposition Bloc."

SA's first national political act was to publish a leaflet, the text emanating from the SA center in California, for distribution to the protests held November 12 to pressure the imperialists to "negotiate" in Central America. But when the leaflets appeared, there were two versions, nearly identical except for the fact that one identified SA as "a public faction of the Socialist Workers Party" while the other said not one word about the origins of the infant organization. The subsequent infighting led to the resignation from SA of Frank Lovell, who began publishing a *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism (BIDOM)* in December. Lovell took strong exception to Weinstein's having signed Lovell's name (and the names of other Breitman group supporters) to a letter to the SWP membership which the purported signatories hadn't seen. Lovell charged the Weinsteinites with seeking to foreclose possibilities of struggle remaining inside the SWP. Lovell felt the main task was to publish for the SWP ranks the documentation of Barnes' purge and the suppressed political materials of the expellees. In January the Bloom/Breitman supporters followed Lovell out of SA to re-coalesce around the *BIDOM* as the "Fourth Internationalist Tendency."

In between these events occurred the final great purge inside the SWP, a selective "re-registration" capped by a



AP

mass trial in absentia. It began at the SWP's California state convention held in early December 1983. The minority document, "Deeds, Not Words," garnered the support of 11 percent of the SWP's California membership. This was evidently too much for Barnes to stomach. The leadership used the minority reporter's statement of solidarity with Socialist Action (i.e., with his unjustly expelled ex-comrades) to launch the final solution. The six minority delegates in California were charged with "disloyal actions" because they did not take the floor to "repudi-

ate" their reporter. Then it was demanded that every opposition supporter in the state repudiate their delegates' disloyalty in refusing to repudiate the minority reporter. Between December 10 and January 4, twenty members were expelled in California and three resigned in protest.

"Thus, within a period of less than two weeks, the scope of the split rapidly escalated from the minority reporter at the state convention, to the entire minority delegation, to the entire minority caucus state-wide, to every single member in California who had at any time identified himself or herself as a supporter of either the Lovell-Bloom or the Weinstein-Henderson wing of the secret faction."

This is the modest description given by the Barnesites themselves in the Political Bureau statement, "End of the Split Operation Against the SWP" in the January 1984 *Party Organizer*.

Barnes had a presumably very merry Christmas and after New Year's the purge went national. Still professing an oh-so-democratic regard for "organizational norms and principles" ("Every member is assumed to be loyal from the day they join..."), Barnes had already marked his intended victims for execution. The Political Committee decided to "draw up a list of minority supporters in every branch; prepare questions to be put to them and organize Political Committee delegations to meet with every individual on the list as rapidly as possible." The Barnesites swiftly ran through their hit list: a knock on the



Monad Press

SWP leaders meet during December 1938 National Committee plenum. Clockwise from top left: Felix Morrow, James P. Cannon, Max Shachtman, George Clarke, James Burnham, Nathan Gould, Martin Abern.



WV Photo

Left: SWP-initiated mass labor rally against Nazis, Madison Square Garden, 1939. Right: Spartacist-initiated Labor/Black Mobilization stops Klan in Washington, D.C., 1982.

door, a demand that you “repudiate” a “disloyal” statement allegedly made at a California meeting, without hearing the tapes or seeing a transcript, and charges are laid. Then on January 4 or 5, the Political Committee held a mass trial—which none of those charged was permitted to attend—and it was all over.

Socialist Action, like today’s Mandelite USec, has set itself on a straight-line course toward mainstream social-democracy. The Weinsteinites aim at being a competent and influential reformist organization, unlike Barnes’ incompetent and weird reformist SWP.

Once liberated from the SWP, the Weinstein crowd lost no time showing what they were made of. Smelling a quick chance to earn their spurs as union bureaucrats’ waterboys during the bitter Greyhound strike last winter, the Weinsteinites were a made-to-order “Solidarity with Greyhound” mass movement. In the first issue (egregiously, printed without a union bug) of their paper, *Socialist Action*, they brag about organizing big events where union fakers came to promise great solidarity actions up to and including port shutdowns...not right now of course. This was good cover for the bureaucrats’ real policy, which was to squash all impulses toward concrete solidarity action. And when in San Francisco, as elsewhere, the slogans of the Spartacist League for mass militant strike action to win the Greyhound strike were picked up by union militants who had come out

for some real class struggle, that’s when the bureaucrats needed some SA waterboys. And SA came through with flying colors, as the labor fakers’ unpaid goons to finger and muscle the real “reds” and prevent militant labor struggle. The Weinsteinites were so gross over Greyhound that in Steve Zeltzer’s Bay Area *Workers Review*, a letter which saluted SA as a generally “positive development” provided this account:

“During at least two rallies, Socialist Action tried to prevent the Greyhound workers and their allies from physically shutting down the San Francisco Greyhound terminal... Socialist Action acting as march ‘monitors’ and the union bureaucracy did succeed in dispersing a militant picket line. They even went as far as to label the chant ‘picket lines mean, don’t cross’ as... ‘ultraleft’. O.k., so the chant was originated by the Spartacist League. So what? It’s a relevant chant.”

Weinstein wants to be a running dog for the American labor bureaucracy, but he inevitably comes up against the same problem that has smashed up the SWP: that kennel already has a much larger inhabitant, the Harrington organization.

And what about the eclectic attenuated centrists now regrouped out of SA as the FIT? We can’t see much of a future for them given their perspective of seeking to resuscitate the SWP. “Save your old dues receipts, the SWP will rise again” is a pretty belated stance applied to a party that decisively rejected the programmatic content of Trotskyism 20

years ago. The sloughing off of the old formulas has about as much real political importance as the German Social Democrats’ official repudiation of “Marxism,” which occurred only in 1959 (!), 45 years after Lenin and the Bolsheviks recognized the definitive passage of social-democracy into the camp of its “own” ruling classes.

What is important about Barnes’ explicit revisionism on the formal plane, and the associated contemptuous discarding of the last elements of human continuity with the old party, is that it reinforces what most leftist observers already know: the Trotskyist party in this country is not the SWP but the Spartacist League.

Expel in Haste, Repent at Leisure

In 1961-63 a fight against the centrist turn of the SWP was waged by the Revolutionary Tendency, crystallizing out of the discussion on Cuba. Castro’s courageous petty-bourgeois nationalists, in the absence of the working class as a contender for state power, overthrew Batista’s made-in-America dictatorship; under the unremitting bellicose pressure of the U.S. imperialists, they uprooted capitalist property and Cuba’s semi-colonial ruling class and established a deformed workers state. This in fact confirmed crucial aspects of Trotsky’s understanding (“permanent revolution”) that in the imperialist epoch the tasks associated previously with bourgeois-democratic revolutions (e.g., national liberation, agrarian reform) can’t be achieved within capitalist confines. “Permanent revolution” was shown in practice first by the October Revolution in Russia. The Cuban case however differed from the Russian in one crucial way: the revolution in Russia was made by the working class under the leadership of a revolutionary proletarian party. Thus the Russian Revolution was open-ended in the possibility of development toward socialism, a course which was frozen by the usurpation of political power by the petty-bourgeois Stalinist bureaucracy, while the Cuban Revolution was deformed from inception and directly gave rise to a deformed workers state.

As custodians of a deformed workers state in the process of consolidation, the Fidelistas’ natural ideological development was to amalgamate as part of the Stalinized Communist movement—in fact they had to rehabilitate for that purpose a Cuban pro-Moscow party entirely discredited as reformist by the Cuban Revolution itself.

The SWP however used Cuba as a

vehicle to embrace the Pabloist liquidationism it had earlier opposed. With the ever adept Joseph Hansen as theoretician, complete with the orthodox disclaimers appropriate to a centrist party, the SWP over Cuba embraced Pablo's notion (Pablo based it mainly on the creation of deformed workers states in postwar Eastern Europe) that forces other than Trotskyist vanguard parties were objectively forced to outline a roughly revolutionary path which was, basically, good enough. With this as the explicit basis, the SWP in 1963 "reunified" with the Pabloists in Europe around Ernest Mandel, and thus the USec was founded.

The Revolutionary Tendency (RT) which emerged in opposition to this course was led mainly by former Shachtmanite youth leaders who broke to the left and were won over to Trotskyism by an SWP whose cadres didn't exactly believe it any more. The pretty sterile orthodoxy which had seen the SWP safely through the fifties, when it seemed that communists could have no impact on American society, collapsed with the signs of new radicalization.

It's too bad the organizationally "loyal" SWP veterans saw the RT merely as troublesome youth. The RT also suffered an unprincipled 1962 split in the tendency (Tim Wohlforth's only lasting contribution to the history of American Trotskyism). This split didn't help either to give the RT credibility as an opposition pole in the eyes of the older party members.

The RT recognized early on the danger of becoming a (short-lived) permanent faction in the youth organization. We sought to become a tendency rooted in the SWP cadre through exercising in the party's discussions the rights established through 35 years of democratic-centralist organizational practice in the American Trotskyist movement. In a letter dated 18 October 1961 to the West Coast RT comrades, Jim Robertson laid out the necessary perspective:

"At bottom, the reason I hold a perspective of struggle against split from the SWP is because the party is *far from* one in which all the revolutionary juices have been drained. Factionalism now is linked with and only has use in a split perspective. In the past few years the party has begun to react to opportunities by turning each one into a cycle of opportunism until the given opening is exhausted. Each time a selection takes place, some—notably the Weiss grouping—get worse and move toward liquidationism, but others react and are impelled in a leftward direction. This process has just begun, if one stops to



Stone/SF Examiner

Nat Weinstein demonstrates for Polish Solidarność with virulent anti-Communists.

view the SWP historically. There are two roads open. Either each wave of oppositionals will let themselves get washed out of the party, making it ever harder for succeeding left-wingers, or each opportunist venture into fresh fields will augment the revolutionary Marxists with additional forces.

"There is one and only one reason for which the SWP should be able to find grounds for our expulsion: the *advocacy* within the movement and within those circumstances as expressly laid down by the SWP leadership of our Trotskyist views."

—"Letter to Ed," reprinted in *SL Marxist Bulletin* No. 2, September 1965

Our comrades were scrupulous in maintaining the party's discipline. To get the RT out of the way of perceived appetites, the Dobbs regime did indeed expel us solely for our views.

The ex post facto justification of that first-ever political expulsion was Dobbs' 1965 resolution titled "On the Organizational Character of the Socialist Workers Party." This resolution has been the cornerstone of SWP anti-democracy ever since. It is explicit on the expulsion of the RT without any proof of violations of discipline:

"They seemed to believe the party would have to submit to their wrecking operation until and unless specific acts of disloyalty could be proved against them...."

"With or without proof of specific acts, the party had the right, and its leadership the duty, to stop the self-indicted factional raiders who were out to wreck our movement."

The new SWP expellees are now loudly bemoaning what they call the "new norms" as they address the question of when did "it" happen, when did the SWP go wrong? In this regard we are indebted to Frank Lovell's *BIDOM* No. 4 for bringing forward a

1966 letter by James Cannon to the SWP party center strenuously objecting to the notion that breaches of internal discussion procedure are grounds for expulsion. Lovell et al. surely find this particularly relevant since the four leading spokesmen of the late minorities were suspended "without conditions" for violating the prevailing SWP norms that minority National Committee members, effectively, may speak only to majority NC members (who presumably, speak only to god?). Over the three years following the RT expulsion, as the SWP's rightist course consolidated on reformist appetite, local clots and leftist cliques were disposed of. The Dobbs regime got rid of the Seattle and New Haven branches, groups around Murry Weiss and Arne Swabek and others—all told, about a third of the membership—more in the manner of the Teamster bureaucracy than of a Trotskyist party. Cannon's 1966 letter is in protest of this purge.

All the so-called "new norms" flow straight from the 1965 resolution. Crucial is the paragraph proscribing a tendency or faction from functioning politically except under the direct scrutiny of the majority: "A dissenting minority has the right to organize itself, but the conduct of organized minorities, just as that of every individual member, must be subject to regulation by official party bodies." In the infamous 1981 \$8.00 internal bulletin, the 1965 resolution is cited no less than 14 times, and frequently it's this paragraph, which abolishes a tendency's rights of private political discussion and correspondence.

Factional rights are the test of party democracy. Virtually any kind of organization can have an orderly discussion of differences—so long as the

differences aren't serious. It is in the presence of tendency struggle that one cannot rely on the objectivity of any side and requires objective criteria. It was in the 1963 RT expulsion that Dobbs introduced the new flexible standard ("disloyalty" not expressed in acts of indiscipline). It was during the RT fight that Dobbs made his pronouncement that: "In the last analysis, the majority is the party."

Cannon's 1966 letter lends credence to the rumor now circulating that Cannon didn't like the organizational resolution (Dobbs was the evident driving force behind it) but was too old and tired to do anything about it. Everybody voted for it. No doubt they thought they had a gentlemen's agreement that it wouldn't ever be used against the insiders. We're not so vindictive that we enjoy it when the resolution you didn't recognize recognizes you. (To feel otherwise would be the kind of vindictiveness that perhaps prevented a Trotsky/Zinoviev bloc in 1924 when it might have counted.)

The 1963 expulsion untimely ripped out of the SWP a few dozen comrades. In 1966 we founded the Spartacist League and subtitled our article on our first national conference "We Are Here!" in recognition of our situation as an unstable sub-propaganda group seeking out of the slender threads of our Trotskyist continuity to reforge an organization in this country—and internationally—embodying the

authentic tradition of the party of Trotsky and Cannon.

Indeed, of all the significant splits from the SWP in past decades, only the Spartacists have persisted for more than 20 years as an effective national organization of ostensible Trotskyism. The Shachtmanites for all their literary intelligence lasted less than this long before entirely organizationally liquidating into the Cold War Socialists of Norman Thomas. The Marcyites (who crystallized in the 1950s SWP as an ultra-hardline current which embraced Stalinism in solidarity with the crushing of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution) gave up calling themselves Trotskyist almost at once. Meanwhile, the Healyites are certainly more out of the workers movement than in it.

But the Spartacists consolidated a stable Trotskyist nucleus, programmatically coherent and governed by democratic-centralism (including internationally, by the way) in the best traditions of the early Communist and Trotskyist movements. It is because we know where we came from, because of our political roots in the fight against the disintegration of the SWP as a revolutionary instrument, that we are here. We stand on the shoulders of the old revolutionary SWP—the American Trotskyist organization founded by Jim Cannon and a cadre of comrades who split out of the early Communist Party in defense of Leninism, the organization through which Trotsky led the Fourth



Barneses expelled James Kutcher, whose case symbolized SWP fight against McCarthyism.

International directly until his assassination by Stalin in 1940. That's *our* SWP; it's not Barnes', and it never was.

Looking for the Good Old Days

For today's expellees, the Breitman wing as much as the Weinstein crowd, the good old days aren't Cannon's organization, but the 1960s of petty-bourgeois radical ferment. All of these comrades longingly recall the SWP's role as movement brokers for the Democratic Party in the anti-Vietnam War protest movement. The SWP emerged from centrist confusion in the mid-1960s in pursuit of a perceived main chance: swelling moods of opposition to the war in Vietnam. The spectacle of the world's most awesome imperialist power losing in Vietnam was to have powerful effects, e.g., a profound upsurge of hope for social liberation among the impoverished, oppressed semi-colonial laboring masses of Latin America and worldwide; the deep erosion of the U.S. army's capacity as an effective fighting force of foreign counter-revolution. At home, with the successive Democratic and Republican administrations pursuing headlong escalation in a losing imperialist adventure, increasingly influential sectors of the ruling class and its politicians wanted to bail out, in the best interests of longer-term U.S. anti-Communist aims. This divergence of ruling-class policy, as well as the taxes/inflation, the significant American battle casualties, the shattered morale of the U.S. conscript army, fueled a real "radicalization" in this country. It was concentrated in the petty bourgeoisie and

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college students (the swiftest social chameleons).

The SWP, like the Communist Party, saw here a main chance to become the main organizer of antiwar protest activism on the political terms of the "progressive" labor leaders and the liberal capitalist politicians. That is, as good mensheviks: in the name of a "broad" multi-class (or "classless") "people's front" of all men of good will for "peace," to bring together the workers and oppressed with presumably enlightened representatives of the ruling class on the "single issue," to oppose the war firmly on the terrain of social-patriotism—i.e., without breaking from



Joseph Hansen

the capitalist parties and their pro-imperialist ideologues advocating smarter strategies for defending "our own" country's global appetites. (In most other capitalist countries, this social-democratic role is embodied in "labourite" and Stalinist mass workers parties; in more politically backward America, the capitalist Democratic Party approximates being the political vehicle of class collaboration by the union bureaucracy.)

The SWP did not eclipse the larger CP but did nevertheless compete quite competently as "best builders" of huge, liberal protest demonstrations where millions of people came to hear capitalist politicians talk about "America's best interests." Needless to say the SWP did not see itself as the right wing of the antiwar radicalization, doing the donkey work to keep American kids under the sway of those who opposed the war

because it was losing. No, they just wrote out of their "mass movement" the hundreds of thousands of campus and minority youth espousing New Leftish and subjectively anti-imperialist slogans. Groups like the SDS, sprouting like wildfire on college campuses, or the Black Panthers, who were looked to by a generation of inner-city black kids as the militant alternative to reformist betrayal, were written off by the SWP as simply "ultraleft." The big political conflict of the Vietnam era was not the SWP's earnest appeals to SANE to espouse "Stop the War Now" rather than "Negotiations" but whether opposition to the imperialist debacle would

the time enabled us to transform our unstable sub-propaganda group: a regular press, our first systematic efforts to sink roots in the labor movement, geographical expansion in the U.S. and extension beyond its borders.

The SWP was utterly discredited in this radical quadrant of the "radicalization," which it minded not at all. When young people with red flags appeared at Vietnam marches chanting "Ho, Ho, Ho Chi Minh, NLF Is Gonna Win" the SWP replied by chanting "peaceful, legal" and setting up breakaway marches, with red baiting and sometimes more directly, for the cops' tender mercies. The SWP's "mass movement" was broad, respectable, carried lots of American flags and disappeared from the streets whenever there was a presidential election.

When the U.S. finally got out of Vietnam, that was the beginning of the end for the SWP. No more mass antiwar demos; a lot of recent recruits with high expectations. The SWP went on promising new "radicalizations" in time for each new conference resolution; meanwhile, capitalist politics was moving right and so was the whole fake-left, responding fundamentally to the moral/military rearmament of imperialism under Carter/Reagan in the renewed anti-Soviet war drive. Barnes played pollyanna but it happened anyway: sharply declining SWP membership rolls, eclipse by the DSA, restiveness among the more experienced and articulate, exaggerated political instabilities up to the present Stalinist shift.

In both the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* published in New York City and the *Socialist Action Information Bulletin* based in California, the nostalgia for the good old days of the 1960s is quite explicit. That's why all the minorityites (the majority too for that matter) were so deeply shocked and sick at heart when the Marcyites outmaneuvered the SWP and brought off a large liberal demonstration against Reaganism over Central America ("May 3rd," 1981, the largest such protest since the Vietnam days—the SL was there as the anti-imperialist contingent in solidarity with the Salvadoran left insurgents). And it's striking, by way of contrast, that none of the ex-SWP elements are bothered by the SWP's conscious, hostile absence from the Labor/Black Mobilization to Stop the KKK in Washington, D.C. ("November 27th," 1982), when under the leadership of the Spartacist League 5,000 militant working people, most of them black, prevent-

be contained within the capitalist political framework.

Of course it was not entirely contained. Countless thousands of would-be anti-imperialist radical kids explicitly championed the victory of the NLF/North Vietnamese forces, making the link from so-called "excesses" in Vietnam to the nature of U.S. capitalist society. Mostly these youth remained under the sway of generally pro-Maoist ideology; some of them we won to Trotskyism by fighting politically in SDS and in the antiwar milieu: for military victory to the Vietnamese social revolution, against the draft and for soldiers' political rights, against the student deferment in opposition to the petty-bourgeois elitism of the milieu, for a perspective of real labor action and political strikes against the war. The comrades we recruited from the antiwar, black and women's movements of

Joseph Hansen

At left: Jim Cannon (left) with his companion, Rose Karsner, and Sam Gordon, 1949. Above: John G. Wright in 1945.



International Labor Defense championed rights of class-struggle militants and the oppressed against bourgeois repression. Left to right: Max Eastman, James P. Cannon and "Big Bill" Haywood in Moscow, 1922.

ed the Klan from staging its first march in the nation's capital since 1925. This mobilization, backed by significant sections of the labor movement, was the first massively successful proletarian anti-fascist action since the Trotskyist-initiated anti-Nazi labor rallies of more than 40 years ago, upon which we model our anti-fascist strategy. Even in hindsight the new ex-SWPer don't aspire to be there as part of the vanguard of independent, militant struggle of the workers and oppressed.

Reformist SWP Misses the Boat

The "peace" movement—directed against the irrationalities and "excesses" of U.S. Vietnam policy and not against U.S. capitalism and its war aims—ended when the U.S. was forced by military defeats at the hands of the courageous Vietnamese to pull out its troops. A decade later, the "Vietnam syndrome"—popular unwillingness to make the sacrifices necessary for serious military involvement against social revolutions abroad—is still very real, but the closest thing it has to organizational expression is Gary Hart.

Over the Vietnam War the SWP consolidated on a fully reformist axis but failed to achieve any stable "niche" on the U.S. left. Its antiwar reformism, its slavish tailism of some of the worst and most right-wing "cultural nationalist" elements of the black movement, its "consistent feminism" hypocrisy as a soft alternative to the "radical feminist" and "socialist-feminist" variants of women's liberation—all this hadn't given the SWP any mass base to offer to sell out, unless you count the augmented

ranks of the SWP itself, then swelled to perhaps 2,000 members. Eventually Barnes discovered the working class and the unions, but that was really late in the game. By then, Mike Harrington's split from the tiny, ossified, discredited, war-hawk Social Democrats had regrouped and grown into a credible social-democratic party, tied in with the black Democrats and union bureaucrats. Barnes & Co. didn't know what hit them; evidently they still don't.

If today's new expellees want to know what hit them, they would do well to consider the purge of the Internationalist Tendency (IT) in 1974, when more than a hundred SWPer were declared by Barnes to constitute a rival party, "the Internationalist Tendency party," and given the heave-ho en masse without recourse to formalities like charges or trials. The "new norms" bemoaned by the recent expellees didn't start in 1981. They made their emergence in 1963 with the RT expulsion (and the ouster of quite a sizable number of other comrades over the next few years); they were formalized in 1965 and used to expel over 100 ITers in one swift stroke in 1974.

The IT was a centrist oppositional current in the SWP whose possible evolution toward authentic Trotskyism was derailed when the IT accepted the political leadership of the "international," which is to say, Ernest Mandel of the USec. Mandel and the European USec were then in the grip of extreme enthusiasm for guerrilla warfare in the "Third World"; Hansen and the SWP were furiously invoking orthodox rhetoric against USec centrist impressionism much the same way that the official

pro-Moscow Communist Parties quote Lenin on the centrality of the proletariat to dismiss the more left impulses of Guevarist types. The IT's rather timid criticisms of the SWP's antiwar line had brought it dangerously close to the "spectre of Spartacism," but the spectre was staved off by tailoring the IT's program to Mandel's specifications.

Mandel himself is a very erudite Belgian professor whose appetite toward social-democratic adviser status has been apparent since the mid-1950s. His stint as a pro-guerrilla centrist coincided with the USec's recruitment in the 1960s of a few thousand subjectively revolutionary youth of New Leftist bent, who moved left from the Stalinist student milieu and were recruited to what Mandel said was Trotskyism. (More recently, under the pressure of the resurgent imperialist Cold War drive, Mandel has brought his "children of May '68" squarely back into the social-democratic fold, tailing Mitterrand and singing the praises of Solidarność.)

Barnes' bureaucratic SWP ousted the IT en masse by announcing that they were splitters. Mandel refused to back up his unwanted leftist American stepchildren with a "franchise"; instead he shoved down their throats the cynical lie that the SWP remained a revolutionary party, and the corresponding suicidal perspective of trying to get back in by any means necessary. At the IT's first post-expulsion national meeting, held in October 1974, the first order of business was to expel two soon-to-be-Spartacists for arguing the IT should consider in its "perspectives" discussion the view that "the SWP is finished as a revolutionary force." Instead, the IT pinned its hopes on Mandel, who left them to twist slowly in the wind.

To understand the IT mass expulsion you have to know the "Watersuit," the SWP's ten-years-long, millions-of-dollars lawsuit against the federal government (see especially "Reformism on Trial," *WV* No. 286, 31 July 1981). Starting from the revelations about the FBI's "Counter-Intelligence Program" (COINTELPRO) "disruption" campaign against black militants and the left, boosted by the Watergate exposures, Barnes envisioned irreversible bourgeois-democratic gains up to and including the "right to revolution." The suit was aimed at much more than a useful court disavowal of FBI dirty tricks after the fact; for Barnes, it was a shot at the big time. The SWP aimed at securing a special license to practice reformism unhindered by the spying

**SWP: U.S. Constitution, Yes—
Russian Revolution, No**

24 July 1981

THE MILITANT

POLITICAL POLICE ON TRIAL

How Marxists view U.S. Constitution
Jack Barnes on fight for socialism and democracy

Does the Socialist Workers Party believe that their ideas are consistent with the philosophy underlying the United States Constitution?

Jack Barnes: Yes, in the sense that a republican form of government—in the sense of a rule of law, which has elected officials that govern—is the only possible basis for socialist democracy, for the



Russian revolution

Winter: Mr. Barnes, does the Socialist Workers Party consider the Russian revolution to be a model to be followed in the United States?

Barnes: No, not in a concrete sense of an overthrow of czarism and the mass of peasantry and all the things that were discussed in the last several hours. That would be false.

Watersuit showed full flowering of SWP's anti-Soviet reformism.

and murderous disruption the state uses against its left-wing political opponents. Barnes aimed to show the SWP as deserving of a special exemption from the state as a reformist party non-threatening to the bourgeois order.

The SWP got the "Watersuit" into gear with the declaration that its legalism was not "contravened" by anything Trotsky or others might have said. The 15 May 1981 *Militant* put it quite succinctly when it summed up Barry Sheppard's testimony as follows: "SWP advocates peaceful election of workers and farmers government, which will need changes in Constitution to implement program." But the real measure of the "Watersuit" was the IT expulsion; red-baiting deeds speak louder than words as a guarantee of reformist tameness. A spate of "terrorism"-baiting of the USec, the IT's mentors, was making the rounds of the European press and had been picked up by right-wing witchhunters in this country. And the one thing the "Watersuit" gimmick couldn't take was anything tainted with the suggestion of "terrorism." So the SWP expelled the IT and served it up on a platter to Judge Thomas Griesa, who was mightily reassured and said so explicitly, commenting that the "ouster of the minority" had "basically eliminated" any "suggestion" of SWP terrorism.

The SWP underscored its hatred for

the IT in court in 1981 by its vicious frame-up of Hedda Garza, labeling her, despite her transparent innocence, a government fink, based on the incredible reasoning internally that "the government would not lie." Today the SA/FIT supporters say they're partisans of Mandel's "Fourth International." But even with the "hundred flowers" of SWP dissidence in full bloom around the 1981 convention, today's professed internationalists were pretty quiet when Hedda Garza was pilloried for having once been too chummy with some foreign members of the "Fourth International" during the mock-heroic period of USec leftism. And we know of no cry of outrage inside the SWP when Barnes & Co. "named names" of foreign USecers in court by sorting out pseudonyms for the government, fingering international comrades to underline the SWP's reformist posture that law-abiding American socialists have nothing to fear from the American government.

Failing to get a nod as America's most favored reformist party, Barnes now looks for patrons further afield. Thus comes the newfound Stalinism: the shift toward adulation without fig leaves of Castro and the more recent shift toward fondness for the Vietnamese leadership (sharply contrasting with the SWP's hostility while the Vietnam War was on, for example in polemics against the

French USec during the 1969-74 USec fight). And thus comes the explicit anti-Trotskyist revisionism.

Weinstein's SA is likely headed for the DSA, probably via maneuvers among the numerous third-campist fragments and cliques who see the new ex-SWPers as the best thing to happen to them since Polish Solidarność. Meanwhile SA takes its place as one more splinter in the name of "movement unity," one more bit of lint on the coattails of the labor bureaucrats. Within months of their liberation from the SWP they showed in action the role they aspire to: Weinstein & Co. wanted to be to the Greyhound strike what the DSA's Winpisinger was to PATCO, conscious opponents of the concrete labor solidarity needed to win. They couldn't be further from us politically if they tried (which of course they do).

But the recently aroused SWP veterans congregated in the FIT/BIDOM of Lovell, Bloom and Breitman are in the grip of genuine contradiction. It's no accident that those of us who go back personally to the SWP have feelings of affection for some of these comrades and no sympathy whatever for the Weinstein crowd. This is a modest psychological reflection of the political realities. The FITers' impulse to cling to Cannon and Trotsky is not so much a program as an act of nostalgia, but an honorable act nonetheless. We have to have some considerable respect for their decades in the Trotskyist movement and for the evident sincerity of their effort not to betray Trotskyism as they understand it—a pale pink attempt at red orthodoxy. Yet the programmatic content of their documents owes more to the pressures of U.S. imperialism's stepped-up anti-Soviet war drive than to the fighting internationalist spirit of Trotsky's "War and the Fourth International." Nor will they derive much profit from brooding about the destruction of democratic-centralism in the SWP with blinders on at the qualitative point of degeneration: the 1963 RT expulsion and the necessary redefinition of the party's "organizational character" codified in the 1965 resolution.

As for the SWP, the large reformist rump of ex-Trotskyism, it's with special pleasure that we endorse what Rhett Butler said to Scarlett O'Hara: frankly, Jack, Mary-Alice and Barry, we don't give a damn. We have paid a lot of attention to the SWP for 20 years, while it claimed to contest the Trotskyist tradition which is ours. But we're pretty bored with Barnes' party: weird, nasty and still shrinking. ■

excerpted from *Workers Vanguard* No. 321, 14 January 1983

In Defense of Permanent Revolution

This article, which has been heavily excerpted for the present pamphlet, appeared in *WV* No. 321, 14 January 1983, under the title: "Whither the SWP?—Barnes Denounces Trotskyism." Our first response to Barnes' now notorious anti-Trotsky public speech delivered in Chicago on 31 December 1982, the article brings together some key historical references refuting Barnes' effort to divorce "Leninism" from the theoretical contributions and revolutionary role of Leon Trotsky. The first part of the article takes up the formula of the "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry," a formula vacated by Lenin in April 1917, subsequently resuscitated by countless Stalinist ideologues and now by Barnes. The second part of the article sketches a defense of the Left Opposition's views on the 1927 Chinese Revolution, views which Barnes considers "sectarian" and "ultra-left."

"Trotskyism, that term itself, I predict, none of us will call ourselves before this decade's out. In fact, if I'm right that what Trotskyism originated as was a fake term by the Stalinists... Trotskyism as such doesn't have much value as a term."

—Jack Barnes,
31 December 1982

On New Year's Eve, at a Socialist Workers Party (SWP) public meeting in Chicago, SWP head Jack Barnes finally declared outright what has been the reality for two decades: the SWP is not the Trotskyist party in this country. Barnes announced that "80 percent of those on a world scale who call themselves Trotskyists... are hopeless, irreformable sectarians." Barnes' two and a half hour speech, delivered as the highlight of the annual convention of the SWP's youth group, centered on a barrage of attacks on the Trotskyist theory of permanent revolution: "The permanent revolution, if these things are true, is not a correct generalization, or an adequate one, or one that doesn't open up more problems than it solves...."

Permanent revolution in action: Russian workers march in Petrograd, 1917. Bolshevik banner reads: "Down with the War! Down with the Capitalist Ministers!"



For any party the explicit renunciation of long-standing "isms" is a significant event and an unusual one. Organizations whose lip-service to Marxist tradition has been long since emptied of content, nonetheless shy away from outright renunciation of their claims to "continuity." Take the furor of the last several years inside various West European CPs over the explicit dropping of the "dictatorship of the proletariat." In real political line, displayed a thousand ways, the craven reformist CPs have had for decades utterly nothing to do with the Leninist program of proletarian class power. Yet the repudiation of "d of the p" by the Spanish CP, for example, was nevertheless a real political event, brought on by the heightening of Cold War tensions which made pro-Moscow parties, no matter how slavishly reformist and social-patriotic in fact, unacceptable participants in capitalist "coalition" governments.

Even an organization on a vastly smaller scale, like the SWP, ordinarily possesses a considerable stake in its historic "labels," particularly since the SWP has been in the Trotskyist business—first in political fact and then as an empty label—for upwards of 50 years.

Barnes began his speech with extensive paraphrases from the recent works of one Schafik Jorge Handal, general secretary of the Salvadoran CP. But most of the talk had a more familiar ring—familiar, that is, to anyone who has ever read or heard the classical reformist arguments against Trotskyism. Barnes' recitation of the early Trotsky's errors as a left Menshevik in opposition to Bolshevism, for the purpose of dismissing Trotsky the Leninist revolutionary, might have been lifted outright from Carl Davidson's "exposé" of Trotskyism ("left in form, right in essence") which appeared some years back in the *Guardian*. Barnes then castigates the theory of permanent revolution as flawed in 1905, wrong in 1917 and, flatly "ultraleft" in China in 1928.

The Theory of Permanent Revolution

The theory of permanent revolution was tested first and foremost in the Russian Revolution. The theory anticipated the change in Lenin's own thinking as he made the transformation, under the pressure of events, from revolutionary social-democrat to communist. By the time of the Prague

Congress of 1912, Lenin was a communist on the organizational question. But his views on the precise class character of the revolution in Russia were still evolving. Prior to April 1917, Lenin sought to oppose the old Menshevik (subsequently, Stalinist) schema that Russia required a "two-stage revolution"—first a "democratic" revolution under the leadership of the "democratic bourgeoisie," and only after a period of capitalist development, a "socialist" stage. But his formula for drawing the line against Menshevik reformism was the inadequate formula of the "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry," postulating the class rule of two classes. Lenin's greatness was precisely that he did not pare down his revolutionary program to fit an inadequate formula, but seized the possibility presented in life to lead the proletariat to the conquest of state power, through the revolutionary combat party he had built for that purpose.

In so doing he confirmed the theory of permanent revolution, which had predicted that in the period of imperialist decay the weak ruling classes of the backward nations could not and would not play the progressive role associated with the bourgeois revolutions of the earlier epoch. Thus the "democratic tasks" once addressed by the old "enlightenment" bourgeoisie—e.g., national self-determination, destruction of feudal class relations in the countryside, abolition of the monarchy, universal suffrage, etc.—could be achieved in countries like Russia only under the class rule of the revolutionary proletariat, which itself had become more powerful, being now concentrated in large industrial enterprises and sectors.

For Barnes, the theory of permanent revolution is "sectarian" and "ultra-left," and was never accepted by Lenin in word or deed. Indeed, Barnes goes so far as to delicately accuse Trotsky of lying about Lenin's positions: "This is the only thing I can remember Trotsky ever writing which I believe is factually false"! To explore this question, some review of the debates surrounding the Russian Revolution is in order.

In his introduction to the first Russian edition of *The Permanent Revolution*, Trotsky noted that for Stalin & Co. the theory of permanent revolution "represents the original sin of 'Trotskyism'." He placed the debate in its distinct historical context. In his "Three Concepts of the Russian Revolution" (August 1939), a work of crystal-line precision, he defined three major arguments on "the historical nature of

the Russian Revolution and its future course of development." These were:

1) *The Menshevik view*: "the victory of the Russian bourgeois revolution was possible only under the leadership of the liberal bourgeoisie and must put the latter in power. Later the democratic regime would let the Russian proletariat, with incomparably greater success than heretofore, catch up with its elder Western brothers on the road of the struggle for Socialism."

2) *Lenin's perspective*: "the backward Russian bourgeoisie is incapable of completing its own revolution! The complete victory of the revolution, through the intermediacy of the 'democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry,' would purge the land of medievalism, invest the development of Russian capitalism with American tempo, strengthen the proletariat in the city and village and make really possible the struggle for socialism. On the other hand, the victory of the Russian revolution would give tremendous impetus to the socialist revolution in the West, while the latter would not only protect Russia from the dangers of restoration but would also enable the Russian proletariat to come to the conquest of power in a comparatively brief historical period."

3) *Permanent Revolution*: "the complete victory of the democratic revolution in Russia is conceivable only in the form of the dictatorship of the proletariat, leaning on the peasantry. The dictatorship of the proletariat, which would inevitably place on the order of the day not only democratic but socialistic tasks as well, would at the same time give a powerful impetus to the international socialist revolution. Only the victory of the proletariat in the West could protect Russia from bourgeois restoration and assure it the possibility of rounding out the establishment of socialism."

In 1917, "Lenin was obliged to alter his perspective, in direct conflict with the old cadres of his party." The October Revolution was the historic test, and confirmed Trotsky's prognosis. There ceased to be "debate" on the character of the revolution after 1917 because the question was solved by the revolution's course. When Lenin appeared before the Petrograd Soviet several days after the insurrection, he announced, "We shall now proceed to construct the Socialist order!"

Lenin vacated his algebraic "democratic dictatorship" theory in April 1917. His "Letters on Tactics" states:

"We have side by side, existing together, simultaneously, both the rule of the

bourgeoisie (the government of Lvov and Gruchkov) and a revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry, which is *voluntarily* ceding power to the bourgeoisie, voluntarily making itself an appendage of the bourgeoisie....

"This 'second government' has *itself* ceded the power to the bourgeoisie, has chained *itself* to the bourgeois government.

"Is this reality covered by Comrade Kamenev's old-Bolshevik formula, which says that 'the bourgeois-democratic revolution is not completed'?"

"It is not. The formula is obsolete. It is no good at all. It is dead. And there is no use trying to revive it."

China and Permanent Revolution

The rise of the Stalinist bureaucracy in Russia, its acquisition of counterrevolutionary consciousness codified in the slogan of "socialism in one country" and the Stalinization of the Communist International resulted in defeat after defeat for the world proletariat. In China, Stalin's policy was not the ambiguous "revolutionary democratic dictatorship" but the Menshevik theory of "stages." It could hardly be otherwise, as 1917 had resolved once and for all the question of whether there could be any genuinely democratic solution short of proletarian rule. In *The Permanent Revolution* Trotsky had summarized:

"The great historic significance of Lenin's formula lay in the fact that, under the conditions of a new historical epoch, it probed to the end one of the most important theoretical and political questions, namely the question of the degree of political independence attainable by the various petty-bourgeois groupings, above all, the peasantry. Thanks to its completeness, the Bolshevik experience of 1905-17 firmly bolted the door against the 'democratic dictatorship'."

Elsewhere in the book, Trotsky quotes Lenin:

"... the whole history of revolution, the whole history of political development throughout the nineteenth century, teaches us that the peasant follows the worker or the bourgeois.... The economic structure of capitalist society is such that the ruling forces in it can only be capital or the proletariat which overthrows it."

—"The Deception of the People by Slogans of Freedom and Equality," May 1919

Permanent revolution, confirmed positively in 1917, was confirmed in the negative in the defeat of the Chinese proletariat in 1927-28 at the hands of their bourgeois Kuomintang "allies." The debate on China was simply over whether or not to subordinate the Chinese workers and peasants to the

native bourgeoisie, a debate in which Barnes says Trotsky "bent the stick to the left." Since 1924, in the China debate and up to the present day, the debate over "permanent revolution" between Stalinism (Menshevism) and Trotskyism (Bolshevism) has been the struggle between the advocates of "alliances" with the bourgeoisie ("anti-fascist," "anti-feudal," "anti-imperialist" to be sure) and those who struggled for the independent mobilization of the proletariat, the vanguard of all the exploited and oppressed, against all wings of the class enemy.

In *The Permanent Revolution*, Trotsky imagines a conversation between a Communist from the East and an apologist for the Stalinized Comintern over the question of what is the "democratic dictatorship":

"But won't you please tell us what this slogan looks like in actuality? How was it realized in your country?"

"In our country it was realized in the shape of Kerenskyism in the epoch of dual power."

"Can we tell our workers that the slogan of the democratic dictatorship will be realized in our country in the shape of our own national Kerenskyism?"

"Come, come! Not at all! No worker will adopt such a slogan; Kerenskyism is servility to the bourgeoisie and betrayal of the working people."

"But what, then, must we tell our workers?" the Communist of the East asks despondently.

"You must tell them," impatiently answers [the Stalinist] Kuusinen, the man on duty, "that the democratic dictatorship is the one that Lenin conceived of with regard to the future democratic revolution."

If the Communist of the East is not lacking in sense, he will seek to rejoin: "But didn't Lenin explain in 1918 that the democratic dictatorship found its genuine and true realization only in the October Revolution which established the dictatorship of the proletariat? Would it not be better to orient the party and the working class precisely toward this prospect?"

"Under no circumstances. Do not even dare to think about it. Why, that is the per-r-r-manent r-r-r-evolution! That's Tr-r-r-otskyism!"

Barnes' attack on Trotsky's 1928 China position is a fundamental statement of anti-Trotskyism. In the year 1928, the Left Opposition issued its *Criticism of the Draft Program of the Comintern*, which marked the decisive extension of Trotskyism from a revolutionary opposition to the Stalinist degeneration of the Soviet Union into an international political tendency. It was over China that Trotsky first put forward the theory of permanent revolution not as particular to Russian conditions but as generally applicable to the whole colonial world. In dismissing

Trotsky as some kind of ultraleftist on China, therefore, Barnes is actually attacking Trotsky's program for all the countries under the yoke of imperialism.

The refusal of reformist working-class leaderships to break with the bourgeoisie and struggle for proletarian state power has led to bloody defeat from Spain to Indonesia to Chile. Less frequently, under certain exceptional conditions (including centrally the absence of the organized working class as a contender for power in its own right), Stalinist- or petty-bourgeois-led peasant-based guerrilla movements have come to power in countries like China, Cuba, Vietnam. The result has been new bureaucratized workers states on a national-Stalinist program—i.e., counterrevolutionary in their policies beyond their own borders, thus minimizing the shift in the world balance of forces. Yet these deformed social revolutions are themselves partial confirmations of the theory of permanent revolution, as these leaderships were forced—in opposition to their stated programs—to go over to the expropriation of the bourgeoisie and the adoption of the socialized property forms first established by the victory of the October Revolution, as the only way to achieve genuine national liberation and to address classically bourgeois-democratic tasks like land reform.

The applicability of permanent revolution to the struggles of today has never been more urgent, or more obvious. Take for example the struggle of the Palestinian masses against class and national oppression. For as long as we can remember, the SWP and its USec allies have hailed something called "the Arab Revolution" as a great anti-imperialist struggle embracing the hideously oppressed Arab workers and peasants *and their rulers*. Has it ever been clearer than it is today that the "anti-Zionist" oil sheiks, the nationalist colonels, etc. who rule the Arab states are not "allies of the Palestinian struggle" but grotesquely subservient to imperialism? The road to Palestinian liberation lies through united class struggle by the Arab, Hebrew-speaking and other toilers of the Near East against Zionism and against all the Arab exploiters, and the creation by the proletariat of a Socialist Federation of the Near East.

Fidel Castro or Judge Griesa?

Whatever emotional satisfaction Barnes may derive from sneering at those who "read Comintern documents through permanent revolution eyes,"

denouncing Trotsky still doesn't make the SWP much of a candidate for the Sandinista or Fidelista franchise. The SWP's yearning for reformist "respectability" necessarily conflicts with its passion for Castro when push really comes to shove—Fidel Castro or Judge Griesa? An early indicator of the already rotted fibre of the SWP was the party's response nearly 20 years ago to the assassination of John F. Kennedy, mortal enemy of the Cuban Revolution, architect of the Bay of Pigs invasion, whose CIA buddies made numerous attempts on Castro's life. When Kennedy was shot, allegedly by Lee Harvey Oswald, publicly identified as a member of the SWP's "Fair Play for Cuba" Committee, the SWP wrote: "We extend our deepest sympathy to Mrs. Kennedy and the children in their personal grief.... Political terrorism, like suppression of political freedom, violates the democratic rights of all Americans...." (*Militant*, 2 December 1963). The same issue of the *Militant* approvingly featured a statement by Chief Justice Earl Warren, with the SWP adding the headline, "At the Moment of Crisis There Were Voices of Sanity." To his credit, Castro did not send condolences; in fact, he used the occasion to remind the world that the U.S. imperialist chief had acted in "a spirit of aggression and hostility" to Cuba.

On the 20th anniversary of the Cuban Revolution, Barnes displayed his unique brand of Castroism: "The Castro leadership began their struggle not by taking up arms, but by doing something we emulated 20 years later—they filed suit against the government. When Batista made his coup in 1952, Fidel went to court...."

To be sure, the SWP for 20 years has had about as much use for Trotskyism as a blind man for eyeglasses—that is, it can serve some functions, but none involving the purpose for which it was intended: the making of proletarian revolution. Still, Barnes' explicit disavowal of Trotskyist pretensions signals new heights of instability for Barnes' party. For our part, we welcome Barnes' speech as a step toward clarity on the American left, tending to resolve the competing claims to Trotskyist continuity. And we hope that among the SWP old-timers, degenerated long since into practicing social-democrats, a few may still be found who won't follow Barnes as he spits on the revolutionary activism of their younger days. We urge them to instead make their experiences accessible to the Trotskyists of today. ■

RESCIND THE SUSPENSIONS!

(Statement to the National Committee of the Socialist Workers Party by the five then suspended supporters of the Revolutionary Tendency, Dec. 10, 1963.)

I.

Introduction: The Political Committee Action Against Us

1. On August 2, 1963, the Political Committee adopted a motion which took up some old accusations of Wohlforth and Philips, paraphrasing them in summary form as (1) "Hostile Attitude toward the Party," (2) "Double Recruiting," and (3) "Split Perspective." The PC motion concluded by instructing the Control Commission to look "into possible violations of the statutes of the party, especially involving Robertson, Ireland, and Harper." On October 24, after some months of purported investigation the CC reported, exclusively on the basis of written opinions offered by Robertson, Ireland, and Harper internally within their own tendency, that: "In these statements by the Robertson-Mage-White minority their hostile and disloyal attitude toward the party is clearly manifested." The PC, in its motion of November 1, found it necessary to expand on the CC's sole conclusion by presenting lurid accusations created out of thin air and giving as sole source "as indicated by the Control Commission's report." The PC went on to suspend from party membership comrades Harper, Ireland, Mage, Robertson, and White. Moreover, the suspensions were without specified time limit and were to be with "the same force and effect" as expulsion during the period of suspension.

2. Thus for the first time in the history of the SWP a leadership has taken the punitive action of exclusion from the party of minority supporters on the basis of opinions! This action is rendered even more grave and unprecedented by the fact that the views for which punishment was inflicted were themselves nothing more than personal contributions to a private discussion within a minority tendency!

II.

Background: Recent Trends in the Party

3. Through the period of the last two party conventions (1961, 1963), the party has witnessed a systematic and general attrition of representation on the NC of all minority factions or tendencies, dissidents, and other crit-

ics. Thus, for example, Bert Deck, the then managing editor of the *International Socialist Review* and associate of Murry Weiss was removed from the NC after he offered a slight modification to the PC line on the Cuban Question for the 1961 convention. In the same period there has been a systematic denial, compounded by calculatedly hysterical Majority hostility, of the rights of the party membership in branches—above all in the largest branch, New York—to express opinions, offer recommendations to leading bodies, or even to discuss new developments or the actions and decisions of the party leadership.

4. A year ago the Majority made an assault on the very right of our minority, and by implication any minority, to exist within the party. A provocative attempt was made by Majority supporters to intrude into a private Minority gathering. As the upshot of our informal protest to party authorities, it was revealed that the incident had taken place at the instigation and under the direction of a Majority PC member. The leadership white-washed this action by adopting a condemnatory motion which accused the Minority of being the guilty party for having held such a private tendency meeting! These events are fully detailed in our document "For the Right of Organized Tendencies to Exist within the Party!"

5. In connection with the last party convention, the Majority made severe incursions upon party democracy and upon our party rights:

a) The National Secretary, Dobbs, without offering any reason, refused to print in the bulletin material on the international question which we deemed important to present to the party. In the same pre-convention discussion period the National Secretary likewise deferred printing documentary material on the youth question. Later an opportune legal problem presented itself as an excuse for refusal. A key document in this collection has been kept from the movement since September, 1961, by the PC.

b) At the convention itself the Majority refused to give any representation on the National Committee to our minority despite a sufficient numerical as well as clear cut political basis for such representation. Thus the Majority has not only deprived us of our proper voice within the party, but it has also put into question the legitimate authority of the leading party

bodies, the NC and PC, by electing them on a restricted basis.

c) In reporting the convention to the public, the *Militant* article, after identifying James Robertson and Shane Mage among others by name, stated that "They charged that . . . the leadership of the SWP were in the process of abandoning Marxism." This cynical abuse of control of the public press by the Majority to identify and isolate inner-party opponents is indeed an abandonment of the method of controversy among Marxists.

6. In a continuous series of incidents over the past two years, the Majority has abused its leading position in the party to hinder, harass, and immobilize supporters of our tendency. The evident general aim of the Majority has been to make as the penalty for individual comrades becoming oppositionists the paralysis of any political role, either within the party or in broader outside movements. Thus there has accumulated a seemingly endless list of all-too-legitimate grievances on this score. Perhaps the most outrageous and flagrant incident of harassment was that against Comrade Shirley in removing her from Southern SNCC work. Most common has been the regular, rarely overridden refusal to accept into membership contacts brought to the party by the minority. Yet throughout the past several years, and whatever the provocation, our tendency has always counselled and insisted that its supporters abide in a disciplined way by the decisions the Majority imposed upon the party.

7. The foregoing sections are intended only to sketch the immediately relevant portion of the party's organizational side in the past period. We do not suggest that these are the main characteristics of the party's evolution, even of the organizational aspect. Rather what is described is that part of the party's face shown to the party's minorities, particularly to our own tendency. At the same time as the comrades of the Revolutionary Tendency have responded in a disciplined fashion to developments within the party, we have not failed to form and offer opinions among ourselves and to the whole party as to the meaning, implications, and direction of the course the party has been pursuing in regards to both political revisionism and organizational degeneration. The determination of the more general processes at work in shaping the party was ex-

actly the subject under hot discussion in the tendency when the documents were drafted over which the Majority now raises a scandal in its desire to exclude us from the party. See, for example, Robertson and Ireland's "The Centrism of the SWP and The Tasks of the Minority" (September 6, 1962), and also the earlier basic tendency statement, "In Defense of a Revolutionary Perspective" (in 1962 SWP Bulletin No. 4).

Suffice it to say that the most salient features of the party's overall motion in the last period have been as follows:

a) In general political approach the party has sought after substitutes for a revolutionary working class perspective—notably the surrender of all Marxist responsibility toward the Cuban Revolution through abasement as an uncritical apologist for the Castro regime; repeating this process over Ben Bella's Algeria; negotiating an alliance of convenience and mutual amnesty with fellow Pabloists internationally ("reunification of the F.I."); and most lately, within the United States, in a will-o'-the-wisp chase after Black Nationalism.

b) Yet while the party Majority has eagerly given itself over to enthusiasm for the goals of alien movements, it has resolutely avoided such opportunities as would further involvement and struggle in the party's own right. Thus actual civil rights work, North or South; a serious approach to Progressive Labor or participation in the travel to Cuba committee and its trip; any modest effort at rebuilding the party's contact with the workers, such as plant press sales or Hazard miners work, have all either come at the Minorities' urgings, but vastly too little and too late, or have been refused outright. The proper word for such conduct is abstentionism.

c) It was in the party leadership's instant, instinctive responses in the moments of great crisis or apparent peril—the Cuban missile crisis last year and the Kennedy assassination this year—that the party's utter loss of a revolutionary compass has been most decisively shown. (See our statement "Declaration on the Cuban Crisis," later printed in 1963 SWP Bulletin No. 18.)

d) Within the party the shift in equilibrium of forces in the central party leadership through the retirement of Cannon and the elimination of Weiss has intensified the drive by the Dobbs regime to solve all questions by brute organizational force.

As a result of the totality of these underlying considerations the Majority leadership has been driven now to seek the exclusion of our tendency from the party. In essence this is a

"punishment" of us for our very tenacity in remaining in the party despite its degeneration and for our intransigence in struggling against that degeneration.

III.

The Accusations Against Us

8. In view of the material already written, listed below, there is by this time little that need be added as regards the vacuity, irrelevance, or downright falseness of the accusations of statutory violations made against our tendency or its individual supporters.

The party leadership has officially presented its case against our tendency in the following materials: a) letter of National Secretary Dobbs to James Robertson, July 5, 1963; b) PC motion of August 2, 1963, "On the Robertson-Ireland-Harper Case"; c) "Report of Control Commission on the Robertson Case," October 24, 1963; d) PC motion of November 1, 1963. The following replies and refutations have been offered by individual tendency supporters: a) letter of Robertson to Dobbs, July 9, 1963; b) letter of Geoffrey White to the PC, November 5, 1963; c) letter of Laurence Ireland to Dobbs, November 8, 1963; d) letter of Shane Mage to the PC, November 10, 1963; and e) letter of Lynne Harper to the NC, November 18, 1963. We urge the National Committee members to familiarize themselves with this correspondence.

9. The accusations of our indiscipline were originally put before the party by the Wohlforth-Philips "Reorganized Minority Tendency" in appendices to their document, "Party and Class" (1963 SWP Bulletin No. 27). We shortly replied with our "Discipline and Truth" (in SWP Bulletin No. 30). In our reply we stated that "Party and Class" lied, and we sought to show why its authors had been led into such action. With documents written earlier within the tendency, which we appended to our reply, we proved that we had been the object of false accusations. Moreover, to even the most superficial observer there is an insoluble contradiction in Wohlforth and Philips' accusations against us. If the charges were true that we were some kind of split-crazed wreckers, then Wohlforth-Philips should have taken far more decisive and prompt action than their act of waiting a year after first revealing within the then common tendency such heinous crimes, then simply repeating the revelations to the party as a whole. But if the charges were not true, they should never have been made in the first place. Instead they went ahead to publicize their accusations and then deprecated them by declaring them to be no valid basis for organizational action against us by the party leader-

ship!

Nonetheless, it is to the credit of the Wohlforth-Philips group that they have now come forward, first, in disassociating themselves from their earlier accusation that we had a split orientation. This had been the *key* point in all of Wohlforth's other charges. Secondly, it is to their credit that they oppose organizational action against us, thereby implicitly declaring that their own old accusations had been without real, actionable substance, but were rather their own interpretations.

10. It would be an enormous and pointless task to seek to pin down and dispose of very many of the irrelevancies or wild distortions in the charges which the PC and CC have levelled against us: e.g., the abusive nonsense about "double" recruitment or the childishness of proposing to expell us because we are alleged to have a "split perspective." Indeed the core of the case against us collapses immediately upon examination because it depends upon one false equation, to wit: party members, even if organizationally loyal and disciplined (as we are), can be "really" loyal *only if*, in the course of carrying out party decisions, they agree with the leadership.

No matter from what side the Dobbsian interpretations given in the PC and CC material are approached, it

"HOSTILE AND DISLOYAL ATTITUDE!"

"After a serious warning was given to the anti-Party elements by the Fourth Plenary Session of the Seventh Central Committee of the Party, Kao Kang not only did not admit his guilt to the Party, but committed suicide as an ultimate expression of his betrayal of the Party."

—Resolution on the Anti-Party Bloc of Kao Kang and Jao Shu-Shih Passed by the National Conference of the Communist Party of China, March 31, 1955.

always turns out that to the central leaders, "loyalty" to the party means loyalty to the leaders. Because our acceptance of discipline justifies and is justified by our inner-party struggle against the leadership policies, our carrying out of party decisions is dismissed as "cynical" and presumably then defective because it lacks sincerity. Thus, many of the "quotations," even in their selected and trimmed form, offered as the views of tendency supporters can have as their only purpose making the point that we don't believe in or agree with the party's changing policies and direction of recent years, nor do we respect the initiators and directors of those changes, either.

(Continued Next Page)

... RESCIND

It is elementary, but no longer obvious in the SWP, to note that discipline has meaning especially when there is *disagreement*. Democratic centralism is *most fully* called upon to regulate differences and mobilize the entire party for carrying out arrived-at decisions when there are sharp and deep-going divisions. To exclude from the party those who have sharp and deep differences, those who believe that the policies and course of the Majority leadership are part of a profound degeneration, is to amply prove the existence of that degeneration.

11. For our part, we have and do declare that our political loyalty lies exclusively with the Trotskyist program. It is as a derivative of this prime consideration that our tendency has always sought to abide fully by the discipline of the party, *despite* the rapidly advancing disease of degeneration in the party. It is in this sense and no other that the much-quoted phrase in the Robertson-Ireland document was advanced about avoiding "mistaken concepts of loyalty to a diseased shell." We would be peculiar people indeed should we find our loyalty resting with the cancer growing within the party! This should have been evident to any honest reader of the materials in question, for otherwise many other statements in these inner-tendency documents would be in flat contradiction and would reduce the entire set of opinions to a meaningless jumble. Notable in this connection is the statement in Comrade Harper's draft, "Orientation of the Party Minority in Youth Work" that "... we must act as disciplined SWP members at all times. ..." Again, in Comrade Ireland's "What the Discussion is Really About," is found: "But since our perspective is one of remaining in the SWP, we can hardly afford to violate 'party discipline or party statutes.'" (Incidentally, this latter document had been turned over to the Control Commission by Comrade Ireland to remove any possible ambiguities about his opinions on actionable subjects. However, the CC in its "Report ..." gave no acknowledgement of the receipt or very existence of this document, much less any mention of its contents!) Finally, to put this whole point another way, if the SWP has become centrist in character as we stated in our main resolution to the last party convention, "Toward Rebirth of the Fourth International" (that "... the centrist tendency is also prevalent among certain groups which originally opposed the Pablo faction"), then some organizational conclusions reasonably follow that justify our acting as disciplined

party members despite the party's centrist politics. Further, it necessarily follows that such a conclusion is no more or less incompatible with party membership than is holding the political analysis which led to it.

IV.

What Our Expulsion Would Mean for the Party

12. It may be that sections of the National Committee have not thought through the *international* implications of expelling our tendency from the SWP. Within the limitations of the Voorhis Act, the American party has been a prime mover in the recent reunification with the Pabloist forces of the International Secretariat. In an effort to draw into the unity as many of the scattered and divided groupings as possible, big promises were made to those *opposed* to the basis of the unification to convince them to come along anyhow. For example Dobbs and Hansen wrote in the article "Reunification of the Fourth International" (Fall, 1963, *International Socialist Review*) as follows:

"Groupings with much deeper differences than opposing views over who was right in a past dispute can coexist and collaborate in the same revolutionary-socialist organization under the rules of democratic centralism." . . . and

"The course now being followed by Healy and Posadas and their followers is much to be regretted. Under the democratic centralism which governs the Fourth International, they could have maintained their political views within the organization and sought to win a majority."

Even more recently the United Secretariat of the Fourth International itself declared in its statement of November 18, 1963, in reply to the Healy-Lambert grouping, that:

"The fact remains, however, that they [British and French 'International Committee' sections] have demonstratively refused to unite in a common organization in which they would be in a minority. They demonstratively refused to accept the majority decision of the International Committee forces on reunification. They demonstratively refused in advance to abide by majority decision of the world Trotskyist movement on reunification." . . . and

"As for our position, we stand as before for reunification—on the basis of the principled program adopted at the Reunification Congress—of all forces that consider themselves to be revolutionary socialists."

13. Our tendency *opposed* the projected unity move. Indeed the tendency itself was born in opposition to the political course which underlay the

projected unification. We stated our opposition and proposed an entirely different political basis for reunifying the world movement in our 1963 draft international resolution, "Toward Rebirth of the Fourth International." We also made it crystal clear in advance that should the pro-Pabloist unification win a majority and go into effect, then the dissident and opposing minority internationally who shared our general outlook should go through the experience of the falsely-based unity attempt. We stated our willingness "demonstratively" to accept the reunification in the entire concluding section of our recent international resolution which states:

"(19) 'Reunification' of the Trotskyist movement on the centrist basis of Pabloism in any of its variants would be a step away from, not toward, the genuine rebirth of the Fourth International. If, however, the majority of the presently existing Trotskyist groups insists on going through with such 'reunification,' the revolutionary tendency of the world movement should not turn its back on these cadres. On the contrary: it would be vitally necessary to go through this experience with them. The revolutionary tendency would enter a 'reunified' movement as a minority faction, with a perspective of winning a majority to the program of workers' democracy. The Fourth International will not be reborn through adaptation to Pabloite revisionism: only by political and theoretical struggle against all forms of centrism can the world party of the socialist revolution finally be established."

THE REASON WHY . . .

"In the last analysis, comrades, the majority is the party. I'll tell you why."

Report by Farrell Dobbs to New York Local on Suspensions, November 7, 1963.

And we ourselves have more than fully met the conditions set forth by Dobbs-Hansen and by the United Secretariat. On top of abiding by discipline and accepting decisions, we have resisted abuse, disloyalty, calculated incitement, and outright provocation by the American leadership to force us to leave "voluntarily." Our tendency is therefore virtually unique in its ability to be the living test of the genuineness of the claimed democratic-centralist based and inclusive reunification. Several things will be clear should we be thrown out for holding opinions by no means more critical of the U.S. and international Pabloist leaderships than views held by others

who have been publicly and repeatedly invited to join in the unification. If we are excluded, then the *true* scope of the unity as an act of bad faith and deliberate fraud by its instigators will be definitely shown to all Trotskyists.

In a very practical and concrete way, the SWP-NC, by its action towards us at its December, 1963 Plenum, will go far in making final for this period both the shape of its own relations with the world movement as well as those of its international allies.

14. Are all sections of the National Committee prepared to take responsibility for the kind of developing internal life which our exclusion would formalize? We are by no means the only people in the party who believe that the SWP is degenerating apace or that the Dobbs regime is a disaster for the party. If these views become proscribed through the awful example of our expulsion, then such opinions would be driven into a fetid underground existence. Inevitably there would be a multiplication of the symptoms of organizational degeneracy—the flaring up of intensely hate-filled quarrels on the permitted secondary questions, cliquist plots, hysterical reactions by a leadership fighting dimly seen enemies. Such an atmosphere could only accelerate the rightward motion of the party's cadres and train the newer members in a caricature of Marxist party life.

These are some of the general considerations which have always kept the Trotskyists from proscribing opinions within the party, however obnoxious they may be to the leadership, or of expelling the holders of such views. Moreover, in the specific case before the NC, action against our tendency will not achieve its desired aim of turning the party into a docile machine. Others will continue as oppositionists within the party, and we will press our struggle from outside for readmission and for acceptance of our political viewpoint. It is within the province of the NC to prevent the demoralization and splintering of the party being brought on by a bureaucratically heavy-handed leadership.

15. For the NC to intervene to return the party to the revolutionary organizational practices of the past is to hold open the possibility of a revolutionary future for the SWP. If the NC permits the destruction of our party membership, it thereby acquiesces to the destruction of any chance for a reversal of the rightward, revisionist course of the party because those who opposed it would be excluded. By eliminating the content of party democracy, the degeneration of the party becomes irreversible. *This need not be!*

The SWP Majority reflects no im-

placable bureaucratic social layer. Its loss of a proletarian, revolutionary perspective, its eager search for substitutes and short cuts—idealizing the radical petty-bourgeois leaderships: the Castros, Ben Bellas, Malcolm X's—is not some inevitable automatic reflex based upon a position of privilege. Rather despair and ensuing degeneration have come through prolonged isolation, persecution, weakness, and aging.

The NC stands now at a last crossroads, at which it yet has open a conscious choice. Sections of the party leadership may already have gone much further in political revision or bureaucratic organizational practice than they ever intended. Although it would be idle to deny that it is very late, there is still a choice; the party does not *have to*, is not predestined to, continue down the road it is travelling at full speed. To repeat: to halt now is to leave open the way back so the party might again have a revolutionary future.

V.

Conclusion: Rescind the Suspensions!

16. In the normal course of seeking to rectify a mistake or an injustice within the party, one would normally turn readily to the NC as a resort, but under the extraordinary circumstances in which the central party leadership has plunged the party with the NC's acquiescence to date, we must offer a reservation. Presumably we are expected to appeal the disciplinary action of the PC against us. But how can we appeal against what has not been the finding of any trial; how can we appeal against accusations which have no relation to any alleged intended violation of the rules of democratic-centralism?

17. Despite the outrageous position in which we would be placed in appealing to the NC from a non-existent trial, we are prepared to send a representative to appear before the NC at its coming plenum to present our case and to answer questions the plenum may wish to put to us. Because of the grave defects in the present situation we do not turn to the NC with an *appeal* but with the demand: **RESTORE PARTY DEMOCRACY! RESCIND OUR SUSPENSIONS!**

18. Finally, we call upon all party members, branches, individual NC members, and political tendencies in the party to present letters and statements to the NC *calling for the lifting of the suspensions and restoration of our party rights as a vital interest of the party itself!*

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Appeal of Expulsion

This document is reprinted from the Bulletin In Defense of Marxism, a monthly public bulletin edited by Frank Lovell and published by the Fourth Internationalist Tendency. The FIT describes itself as a public action of the SWP and is one grouping of recently ousted SWP oppositionists, the former Lovell/Bloom tendency which had been organized as the Fourth Internationalist Caucus inside the SWP.

New York City
April 13, 1984

National Committee, SWP

Dear Comrades:

I appeal to you against my expulsion for "disloyalty" by the Political Committee on Jan. 4. I ask you to reverse the PC action and reinstate me to membership with full rights to participate in the coming pre-convention discussion. If you sustain my appeal, I urge you to also reinstate the many other members who were expelled on the same basis that I was expelled. I don't make that a precondition for my appeal, but it obviously would be inconsistent to reinstate one or some of us without reinstating others who are equally innocent of the PC's "disloyalty" and "splitters" charges.

It is a difficult thing for the NC to reverse an action of the PC, which is your subcommittee. That is why it happens so rarely. But sometimes such a reversal is advisable, even necessary. I think this is one of those unusual occasions.

Unusual steps are justified by crisis situations, and the party certainly is in a crisis now. The morale of the members has been badly shaken by developments in the party since the 1981 convention. The size of the party is around half of what it was in 1977; the decline since the 1981 convention has been close to 30 percent, and the hemorrhaging did not stop with the January purge—members are still being expelled or pressured to resign because of real or potential political differences. Several branches built with such difficulty in the last decade are being dissolved. Many sympathizers or active supporters are aghast at the purges. Our influence in other movements is at its lowest point since the early 1960s. The SWP has never been so isolated in the Fourth International.

The PC, and the smaller "central leadership team" that dominates it, deny



George Breitman

Militant/Walter Lippmann

that the party is in crisis, but even they concede it has many problems today. And the cause of these problems (or crisis)? According to the central leadership team, they (or it) are the result of a disloyal secret faction that conducted a split operation against the party. But this is a fairy tale. There was no secret faction; there were different oppositional tendencies in the party, and two of them formed an opposition bloc in the NC at the May 1983 NC plenum. The central leadership team designated them a faction although they said they were a bloc of tendencies and not a faction. But what was "secret" about them? They announced their bloc openly, presented you with their platform in writing, and asked you to inform the party members about their formation and platform. The central leadership team persuaded you to deny this reasonable request and—even worse—to decree that the members could not be informed in plenum reports of the very existence of the Opposition Bloc. So the only thing "secret" about it was your action to prevent the members from knowing that it had come into being in accord with the party's organizational norms. It was neither a faction (as defined by the central leadership team) nor secret.

Equally fictional are the charges about disloyalty and a split operation. The central leadership team began to abuse the whole concept of loyalty/disloyalty in 1980. Some of you who were on the PC then will recall that I protested against this at plenums in 1980 and 1981, when I was

still on the NC. After a temporary retreat, the central leadership team has resumed these abuses, making the mere holding of political differences with the team the equivalent of disloyalty to the party. I feel embarrassed at the thought of having to prove my loyalty to the party—my record speaks for itself. If I was a loyal member up to the 1981 convention, when the nominating commission tried to force me into accepting reelection to the NC against my wishes, when did I become disloyal? And why? When Stalin accused the Old Bolsheviks of having become agents of the Nazis, Trotsky replied that such a thing was impossible for lifelong revolutionists psychologically as well as politically. I think a similar statement would be applicable to the many founders of the SWP who have been purged in recent months. Call them what you wish—behind the times, outdated, too rigid, resistant to change, senile, etc.—but the last thing they can rightly be accused of is disloyalty to their party. I hope that the party members and a majority of the NC will recognize this charge as fraudulent, not only in my case, not only in the case of other founding members, but of all those who were expelled because they refused to "repudiate" things allegedly said or not said at the California state convention. You know very well that if the same demand had been presented to all the members of the party, not just oppositionists or critics of the central leadership team but many other loyal members, including supporters of the team, would in self-respect have done the same thing we did—that is, refuse to repudiate other members on the basis of inadequate information. That was why only oppositionists or critics, real or presumed, were asked to answer the fatal repudiation query.

There was a split operation, but not on the part of oppositionists. The central leadership team began talking about a split the day after the last convention in August 1981. In September 1981, two of its representatives, Ken Shilman and Mac Warren, told Les Evans in Minnesota, who was then a supporter of the majority group, that the leadership in New York expected the party membership (then near 1300) to be thinned down to 850 before the next convention. This was a remarkably accurate forecast, which most of you present members of the NC must have heard at the time. The reason it was accurate was that the central leadership

team has been busy ever since trying to make it accurate by driving people out of the party. Another name for such an operation is "split."

The reason why the central leadership team organized a split is perfectly obvious. Prior to the 1981 convention it decided that the SWP should distance itself from Trotskyism, permanent revolution, political revolution, etc., because these and related programmatic concepts were unacceptable to the Castroist currents to whom the team thought the party should orient and adapt. Instead of presenting this fateful proposal to the party in the 1981 preconvention period, so that the members could consider, discuss and decide it, the central leadership team kept it from the membership and even from the NC before the convention, where a large number of NC members were not reelected merely because they could not be counted on to go along with the new anti-Trotskyism orientation. It was not until after the convention that the central leadership team began to implement the new orientation, taking one step at a time while vehemently denying any new orientation was intended. The first open step was at an expanded PC meeting two days after the convention when it was decided to organize "Lenin classes" whose main purpose was to lay the basis for downgrading Trotsky, Trotskyism and the FI. Two months later came the first Doug Jenness article in the *ISR* publicly signalling the repudiation of Trotskyism and permanent revolution, which Jack Barnes made explicit 14 months later in his speech to the YSA convention at the end of 1982.

It was inevitable that changes of such scope and depth, *made piecemeal without any discussion or decision by the party*, would create indignation or consternation in the party and demands that they be discussed. But the central leadership team did not want them discussed—it wanted to change the party's positions without a discussion because it feared that it could not get the membership's consent through a democratic discussion. The same lack of self-confidence and mistrust of the membership led the central leadership to decide that opponents of the new undiscussed orientation had to be discredited and ousted before the next preconvention discussion period would open in the spring of 1983.

So when Frank Lovell asked the November 1981 NC meeting, shortly after the first Jenness article, to open a literary discussion in the party about Leninism and its relation to Trotskyism, he was maligned as an opponent of the study of Lenin and his motion was defeated. The very idea of a discussion was denounced as a ruse to reopen questions decided at the convention, although the Leninism dispute had not even been mentioned at the

convention. When Lovell and Steve Bloom one month later set up the Fourth Internationalist Caucus in the NC, again calling for a literary discussion of Leninism and Trotskyism, they asked the PC to make their five-point platform available to the members; the PC rejected this as a trick to "reopen the party internal discussion bulletin," which they had not even mentioned. (The falsity of this claim was exposed nine months later when the PC did circulate the F.I.C. platform to the members without reopening any internal discussion bulletin.) When Lovell dared to show the F.I.C. platform to a member who asked him about it, the NC plenum of February-March 1982 ruled that he and other NC oppositionists had "forfeited" their membership in the party, and adopted a series of 27 motions establishing "new norms" that would make it easier to expel oppositionists or critics. From then on the internal situation deteriorated drastically month by month and expulsions became commonplace. *That* is the origin of the party crisis—it was created by the central leadership team, not by a nonexistent secret faction.

Whenever critics of the new orientation tried to say anything at branch or district meetings, they were declared out of order and were told, repeatedly, that they would have a chance to present their views at the "proper" time—when the preconvention discussion would be opened in the spring of 1983. But the central leadership team had no intention of letting oppositionists discuss the new orientation in 1983, or any other time. It voted down the Opposition Bloc motion to have the convention in August 1983, two years after the previous convention. Then it voted in August 1983 to postpone the convention for a full year, to August 1984, and simultaneously ousted all four oppositionists in the NC from both the NC and the party on the flimsiest of charges (cynically accusing *them* of conducting a split operation). The central leadership team had hoped that the ouster of the four NC members would provoke a split, which could be blamed on the oppositionists. When that didn't happen, it was forced to resort to the clumsy and transparent mass purge at the beginning of 1984. Bad as that looked to the members of the SWP and other sections of the FI, it was considered necessary by the central leadership team, which was determined to get rid of all oppositionists before your plenum this month opened the preconvention discussion.

That brings us to the present situation, which is absolutely unprecedented in the long history of our party. Never before has our NC opened a preconvention discussion after expelling all members known to have or suspected of having differences with the leadership. What kind of discus-

sion can it be when the remaining members are all acutely aware of what happened to those who were going to defend political positions the party has had since its inception? Such a discussion cannot impart genuine authority to any leaders elected by such a process, and it can only discredit the party in the eyes of revolutionary workers everywhere.

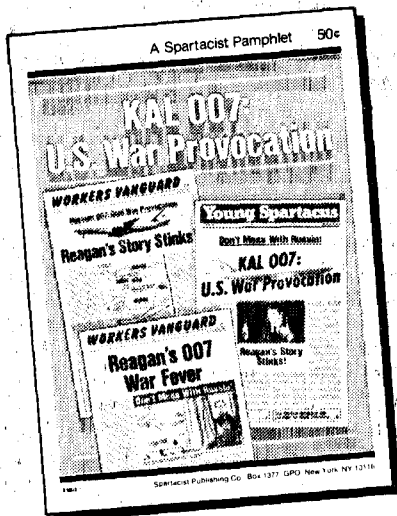
How can you get the party out of the impasse to which the central leadership team has led it? There is only one way, the one proposed by the Fourth Internationalist Tendency in its March 26 letter to you (reprinted in *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* No. 5, April 1984): Reinstatement of the members expelled for political reasons since the last convention if they pledge to abide by the decisions of the convention and let them participate in the preconvention discussion on the same basis as other members. This alone will make a real discussion possible; this alone will enable the party membership to hear all sides of the dispute over the central leadership team's new orientation away from Trotskyism and to pass judgment on it in a democratic and definitive way; this alone can lead the party out of its present crisis. If we oppositionists actually are splitters and disloyal, that will be demonstrated to the members in the discussion, and you will be able to expel us again after that with their approval. If on the other hand the discussion disproves the charges against us by the central leadership team, that too would benefit the party.

It will be difficult for you to make such a move, as I said earlier. But you can do it without necessarily passing judgment on the PC or the central leadership team. All you have to decide and say is: "It would be in the best interests of the party to have a democratic discussion of all the issues confronting us, but that isn't possible when the defenders of the positions challenged by the central leadership team are excluded from the discussion. Therefore, in the best interests of the party, and without prejudice to charges that the central leadership team may want to bring against oppositionists at the end of the political discussion culminating in the convention, we hereby grant the appeals of members expelled since the last convention who agree to abide by the decisions of the convention and of the leadership it elects, and reinstate them to membership at once so that they can participate fully in the preconvention discussion and other work of the party."

I think the party members would support such a move by you with enthusiasm and gratitude. I think it would also have a healthy impact on those expellees whose unjust expulsions have had disorienting or demoralizing effects on them.

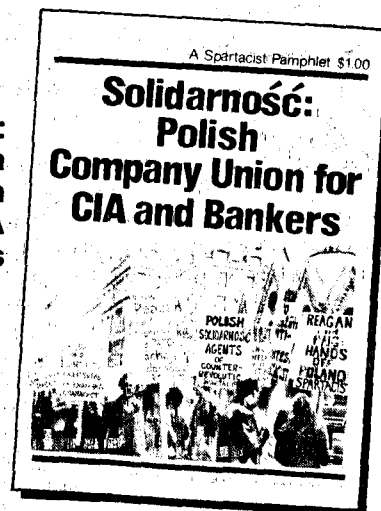
Comradely,
George Breitman

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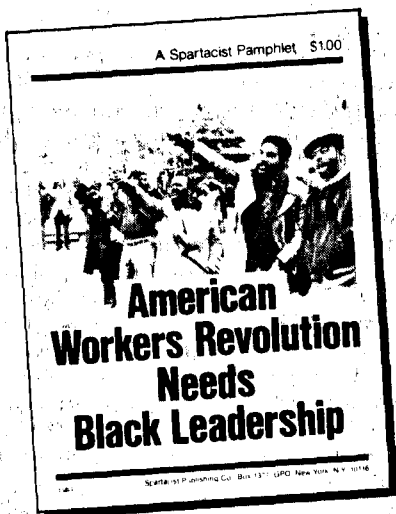
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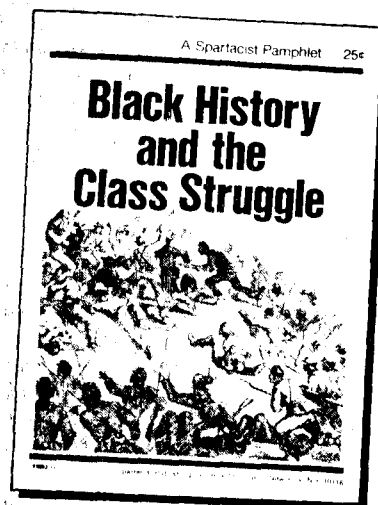
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