

Information, Education, Discussion **Bulletin**

In Defense of Marxism

Published by expelled members of the Socialist Workers Party, Fourth Internationalist Tendency

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"All members of the party must begin to *study*, completely dispassionately and with utmost honesty, first the essence of the differences and second the course of the dispute in the party. . . . It is necessary to *study* both the one and the other, unfailingly demanding the most exact, printed documents, open to verification by all sides. Whoever believes things simply on someone else's say-so is a hopeless idiot, to be dismissed with a wave of the hand."

—V.I. Lenin, "The Party Crisis," Jan. 19, 1921 [quoted in Trotsky's *The Challenge of the Left Opposition* (1926-27), p. 247; for another translation see Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 32, pp. 43-44].

The *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* is published by the Fourth Internationalist Tendency, founded by members expelled from the Socialist Workers Party because we opposed abandoning the Trotskyist principles and methods on which the SWP was founded and built for more than a half century.

Denied the right, specified in the SWP constitution and by Leninist norms, of a full and free discussion of all programmatic changes, we were subjected first to gag rules and slander and finally to wholesale expulsions. The present leadership has resorted to these bureaucratic methods in order to impose their revisionist political line upon the party without discussion or approval by the membership.

We are now forced to organize and conduct this discussion outside the SWP. Our aim is to encourage discussion and debate within the party by those seeking to defend revolutionary Marxism and to bring about our reinstatement in the party.

We firmly believe that the present leaders of the SWP cannot avoid that discussion through organizational measures and expulsions. The relevant issues will increasingly appear on the agenda as their new course comes into conflict with the reality of the class struggle in the U.S. and around the world.

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Closing date for material,
August 30, 1984

AN EXPLANATION AND APPEAL

We tell you frankly that Issue No. 1 of Bulletin in Defense of Marxism was published with some trepidation and in modest numbers. Where to begin? Whom to send it to? Is there interest in our struggle in the Socialist Workers Party?

The response to the Bulletin ended our trepidation and required an increase in the press run. Yes, there was interest in the struggle in the party and in the fundamental questions in dispute. We received contributions and requests for complementary copies.

With Issue No. 4 we began a subscription campaign and subscriptions arrived from across the country. The Bulletin was sent abroad in the form of subscriptions and exchange copies. Our press run increased-- and our expenses increased.

Subscription rates do not cover costs. Mailings abroad are expensive. Complementary copies are continually requested.

We must appeal to you for help.

We need additional subscriptions and we need additional contributions.

We repeat what we said in Issue No. 1: "We believe our material will be of interest and value to comrades in the radical movement as well as to those in the Socialist Workers Party and Fourth International who hope to see the revolutionary party in the United States develop. A leadership that expects to build a mass working class party in this country, and elsewhere in the world, must be prepared to explain and defend its program to the widest possible working class audience."

You can help us fulfill this goal.

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FIT CONFERENCE CALLED

by Carl Jackson

The leadership of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency has called for a national conference of the tendency to take place in Minneapolis, Minnesota the first weekend in October.

The F.I.T. was formed at an earlier meeting in Minnesota only seven months ago, held in the wake of the undemocratic expulsions from the SWP that were carried out last winter. That conference established the F.I.T. as a national tendency determined to pursue the necessary debate over basic political issues which the Socialist Workers Party leadership still seeks to avoid. We identified that task as the most urgent and pressing for those wishing to build a revolutionary party in our country. We refused to abandon the SWP without vigorously pursuing every possibility of forcing a full discussion of the basic political questions. We have continued to hold that view and to organize our activity accordingly.

We now have had several months of experience in carrying out our tasks and functioning as a tendency. We've established the Bulletin in Defense of Marxism on a regular basis and undertaken other publishing projects as well. We've established several local groups around the country and successfully carried out political activity. Most importantly, we've continued to speak out effectively on the issues even while the Barnes leadership continued its policy of slander and avoidance of honest discussion. We've had a chance to observe the SWP as it went through its first convention since 1981, the first convention since the purge. Our members have also been active in various mass organizations.

In a few short months we've gained a great deal of experience and had a chance to test our political perspectives against actual events. This national conference will permit us to compare notes, draw lessons, and prepare to move forward.

The proposed agenda for the national conference includes points on F.I.T. perspectives, the coming world congress of the Fourth International, the antiwar-Central America solidarity movement in this country, and the organization of the tendency.

The world congress of the Fourth International, scheduled for early 1985, is particularly important. It offers an opportunity to press the ideological battle within our world movement between revisionism and Trotskyism. By taking positions and arguing for them before our world movement we can advance the fight for programmatic clarity and revolutionary principle. Discussion and adoption of such positions will be a central part of the conference.

Our conference will be taking place as the revolutionary Marxist movement in the U.S. continues to experience one of its worst crises in history. F.I.T. members are now participating in a thoroughgoing discussion that will prepare the ground for our future activity.

BUILDING FOR THE CLEVELAND ANTI-INTERVENTION CONFERENCE

by Sarah Lovell

The Emergency National Conference Against U.S. Military Intervention in Central America/the Caribbean will meet in Cleveland over the weekend of September 14-16. Its organizers hope to bring together all opponents of U.S. intervention for the purpose of coordinating and organizing mass actions against the U.S. government's belligerency. The conference has been on the agenda of many organizations and individuals in the solidarity, peace, women's, religious, political, and labor movements. As the date approaches, it is picking up steam, moving ahead, gaining new supporters.

A sampling of endorsers since the Call for the conference was issued includes: Women Strike for Peace; CISPES chapters of Cleveland, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Central Virginia, Oakland-Berkeley, and Indiana; Puget Sound chapter of the Coalition of Labor Union Women; Philadelphia Labor Committee for Human Rights in Central America and the Caribbean; the International Chemical Workers Union; and the United Furniture Workers.

Especially significant is the large number of endorsements by local union officials and union members. Ron Weisen, president of United Steelworkers Local 1397, has distributed nearly a thousand copies of the Call among steel locals and says there will be a good representation of steelworkers at the conference. He will speak at the Friday evening conference session on "Winning the Labor Movement to an Anti-Intervention Position."

Al Lannon, president of Local 6, International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union, San Francisco, will also address the conference. Another addition to the speakers' list is Francisco Acosta, U.S. and Canadian representative of FENASTRAS, a major Salvadoran labor federation. He will speak on Sunday morning.

All participants are urged to submit their ideas and proposals for the anti-intervention movement to the conference. In their August 10 letter to endorsers the conference organizers present their tentative proposals which include: united local actions during the period October 20-28 marking the anniversary of the U.S. invasion of Grenada; united local actions following this fall's elections, no matter who wins, to demand an end to U.S. involvement in Central America and the Caribbean; and encouraging the entire anti-intervention movement on a national level to join together in organizing national demonstrations on April 20, 1985, in Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, and San Francisco. However, the conference organizers point out, no proposals, including their own, will receive any special treatment and decisions will be the result of democratic discussion and vote by all the participants in the conference.

Cleveland is an appropriate site for the conference. In the sixties conferences were held here with the aim of initiating and building an anti-Vietnam war movement. This is recalled in a Cleveland Plain Dealer August 15 news article titled "Fanning the embers of protest--Movement against American role in Central America may gain Vietnam momentum here."

We in the Fourth Internationalist Tendency expect the conference will succeed in its immediate goals. We urge members of the Socialist Workers Party and all others who want to build a massive movement to stop the U.S. war against the Central American and Caribbean people to attend the conference and help make it a success.

August 29, 1984

THE 32ND SWP CONVENTION

By Bill Onasch

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

While the author of this article was in Oberlin during much of the convention, I was prohibited from attending any of the events and cut off from access to official documents. My sources of information cannot be verified in the standard ways. Nevertheless, I am convinced this article is accurate as far as it goes. I will welcome any corrections or additions by the SWP leadership or any other convention participants.

The 32nd National Convention of the Socialist Workers Party has finally taken place. Twice postponed, a year late according to the constitutionally-prescribed interval between conventions, this gathering represented a sharp departure from many traditions of the first 31 SWP conventions. It was staged to ratify the theoretical revisions and massive purge carried out by the Barnes faction and to be a giant rally for that faction's wrecking operation within the Fourth International.

FOURTH INTERNATIONAL EXCLUDED

SWP conventions and educational conferences have always been international gatherings. Though prohibited by reactionary U.S. law from formally affiliating to the FI, the SWP has from its foundation been a Fourth Internationalist party, a key component of the world movement. Even during times of bitter internal struggles--such as the great debates over guerilla warfare in the 1960's and 70's--the SWP encouraged the greatest possible international representation at our gatherings so that we could learn from one another, frankly debate our differences and strive to build genuine international collaboration.

There were international guests at the 32nd convention--but only those who were granted political visas by the SWP leadership on the basis of loyalty to the Barnes faction. (The Canadian and New Zealand sections have marched lock-step with Barnes along the road to revisionism. The Barnes faction also has lined up a substantial minority in Britain and has scattered groupings of followers in a few European and Latin American countries and a tiny group of supporters that were expelled from the Australian SWP.)

The official leadership of the FI and all those considered supporters of the "international majority," (that is anyone not a part of the Barnes faction) were excluded from attending the 32nd convention and the concurrent Education and Activists Conference. This unprecedented exclusion gives us some insight into the Barnes camp conception of the "new Leninist international" that they counterpose to the existing Fourth International.

REAFFIRMING AND DEEPENING THE PURGE

The first point on the convention agenda was "appeals" (this was a "closed" session, open only to delegates). There were dozens of expulsions of oppositionists from the SWP during the three years between conventions.

Weeks before the convention, the SWP NO sent out individual letters to the expelled saying the convention would consider their appeals and if the delegates decided they wanted to hear appeals in person, those persons would be notified by "telegram."

The norm in the SWP has been for individuals or representatives of factions or tendencies to be able to speak in their own defense before the delegates in cases of appeals. In that democratic tradition, the Fourth Internationalist Tendency sent a request to the SWP Political Committee asking that they recommend that two FIT representatives address the convention on behalf of the several dozen expelled members in our organization. We further requested that Steve Bloom and Frank Lovell--National Committee members suspended by the NC--be permitted to defend themselves in a trial before the delegates. Only the convention itself can expel NC members. Our requests were never acknowledged. Our representatives, on hand in the Oberlin area, were never contacted by "telegram" or any other method. No report was made to convention guests as to the outcome of the appeals point. Only two weeks later did individuals receive letters from the SWP NO informing us that the convention had rejected our appeals. Not only were all appeals rejected, but at least one additional expulsion was carried out during the convention itself. More about that later.

FIT PROTESTS OUR PURGE

On the second day of the convention, after it became clear that we would not be allowed to present our case to the delegates, FIT members publicly demonstrated that we would appeal our expulsions to the upcoming World Congress of the Fourth International. This took the form of attaching signs to a parked car near the entrance of the main convention sessions. We were in no way disruptive or provocative, and not wishing to set up any further victims to the witch hunt, we did not attempt to engage any convention delegates or guests in political discussion.

As comrades passed by our car, we did exchange civil greetings with many old acquaintances. A prominent leader of the British Barnes faction stopped by once to engage in some good-natured baiting. One comrade who stopped to exchange some small talk came to regret it, however.

THE EXPULSION OF EILEEN GERSH

Eileen Gersh of Philadelphia was already in big trouble when she came to Oberlin. Somehow overlooked in the ruthless purge of all known oppositionists, she took up the cudgels against revisionism during the pre-convention discussion. She went so far as to call for the formation of a tendency to combat the leadership's abandonment of Trotskyism and to fight for party democracy. She so upset Jack Barnes, the national secretary himself felt compelled to write her a long letter warning her that while she could call for a tendency, she better not collaborate with anyone else in developing its platform or advancing its ideas.

Eileen is a long-time friend of Frank Lovell, one of the expelled FIT leaders who stood by the protest signs. On Monday morning, she stopped briefly at the car to exchange some small talk with Frank. This terrible crime did not go unpunished.

At 1:30 AM, Wednesday morning, Eileen was visited in her room by the party Control Commission. She was charged with "unauthorized collaboration" with the FIT. At 7:00 AM that same morning, she was informed that she had been expelled by the "political committee" and was physically escorted off the campus. She was denied the opportunity to even see the comrades she had ridden to Oberlin with. She was graciously granted about 11 hours in which to file an appeal of her expulsion.

The "political committee", which is traditionally dissolved at the beginning of the convention, sent a dual message through this action: 1) dissidents will continue to be purged on any trumped-up charge and 2) everyone is being watched, and contact with expelled oppositionists will not be tolerated.

RESOLUTIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

After the January purge, the Barnes faction had hoped that they had finally created a monolithic party and that they could safely open discussion without any challenge to their revisionist course. This did not prove to be completely accurate. In addition to already mentioned Eileen G., there were a number of critical articles in the pre-convention discussion bulletin concerning the workers and farmers government, party democracy, anti-war work and problems with the "turn." While the effect of the purge and the voting rules precluded the election of any dissident delegates, clearly the party is not yet devoid of critical thinkers. The leadership faction still feels compelled to try to cloak their revisionism in the appearance of revolutionary Marxist orthodoxy.

The centerpiece of the convention discussion was supposed to be the "workers and farmers government" based on a 1982 report by Barnes, augmented "theoretically" by the Mary-Alice Waters article in the current New International. Both Barnes and Waters gave major reports on this topic to the convention.

This retrogression toward the two-stage theory of revolution is camouflaged by trying to link it to previous party positions on both the use of the W & FG as a slogan and Hansen and Chester's contributions on transitional governments. It is not within the scope of this article to deal with the substance of the revisions presented by Barnes and Waters; previous issues of Bulletin IDOM have dealt with them extensively.

Needless to say, no delegates expressed any dissenting views during the course of the discussion and all reports were adopted unanimously.

"TAKE IT EASY--RELAX"

The theme running through the organizational reports and workshops was along the following lines: This is a preparatory period. Not much can be done. Don't wear yourself out. Relax, read, sell at the plant gates, have some forums, study Lenin. A very inspiring prospect for the rebel youth!

It was acknowledged that the party has shrunk drastically--down more than 40% from the peak membership a few years ago. There were hints that this decline may not yet be over. But these severe losses are chalked up to "the period" we are in and to those who couldn't adjust to the turn.

THE EVILS OF ELECTORALISM

In the Political Resolution and throughout reports, workshops and classes, a great new emphasis was placed on combatting "electoralism." One might come to the conclusion that the big problem among U.S. workers is not the lack of class consciousness but illusions in the electoral road to socialism. Votes for socialist candidates are disparaged as not being worth much and even a labor party, if it lacked a revolutionary program, would be a big "obstacle."

Fortunately, this newly re-discovered task of campaigning against electoralism coincides with the party's inability to put on an effective national election campaign. Scant notice was paid to the campaign at the convention. No workshop was scheduled for campaign work as such; election work assumed its modest role in the "Party's Propaganda Perspectives" workshop along with all other routine work. An election campaign rally was dutifully attached as if it were an afterthought as the final event of the week's activities.

DEFENDING THE CENTRAL AMERICAN REVOLUTIONS

There is no doubt that the question foremost in the minds and hearts of the delegates and observers was defense of the revolutions in Central America. The SWP's identification with these struggles is the single biggest factor in attracting and holding members. What did the leadership have to offer in this area? Sadly, not much.

Comrades filled the "Campaigning Against U.S. Intervention in Central America and the Caribbean" workshop to overflowing to hear SWP Co-Chair Barry Sheppard outline the party's plans. They were told the region remains the center of the world revolution. They were told inevitably U.S. imperialism would invade the region and that prolonged war would spark a massive response in the labor movement and among the oppressed nationalities. They were told in the meanwhile...sign up co-workers for Militant tours to Nicaragua.

This obviously seemed to many comrades an inadequate response to the war drive. Questions were asked about the national anti-intervention conference called for Cleveland, September 14-16. Sheppard tried to simply dismiss the conference as an FIT project that won't amount to anything. Sensing that many present didn't accept that analysis Sheppard assured everyone the "Cleveland comrades" were keeping an eye on this conference and in the unlikely event that it did develop into something, the party would intervene appropriately.

WHAT THE CONVENTION PROVES

The 32nd convention codified the revisions introduced by the central leadership since the 31st convention. It upheld the purge of oppositionists and legitimized the new organizational "norms" already enforced by the Barnes faction. It projected continuing abstention from living struggles in the labor and anti-intervention movements. It threatened to provoke a split in the Fourth International by excluding all FI members not enrolled in the Barnes faction. In short, the convention moved the party further down the road of degeneration.

COMMENT ON THE SWP DRAFT POLITICAL RESOLUTION

INTRODUCTION

On July 15, the SWP "Political Committee Draft Political Resolution" was finally made available to the membership of the party--only two weeks before they had to vote on it and elect delegates to the party convention. By delaying so long before producing this document, the central party leadership sabotaged any possibility for the ranks to participate in a genuine discussion of party perspectives. This is one more step in the process of undermining the basic democratic rights of the party membership. It has been the established tradition in previous discussions in the SWP for the leadership's draft political resolution to be presented to the membership at the beginning of the pre-convention period.

The resolution that finally appeared, and which was adopted by the delegates to the August 4-9 party convention, is much more than an attempt to assess the current state of U.S. politics and the tasks of the party. It constitutes a ratification and codification of all of the changes in the program and organizational principles imposed by the Barnes leadership since the last convention in 1981. It therefore marks an important milestone in the party's evolution. The programmatic and organizational changes are no longer simply the responsibility of the NC and PC. They have become the official policy of the entire party.

The articles on the next few pages comment on specific aspects of the Political Resolution, and its implications for the future of the SWP.

WHAT ABOUT THE TURN?

by Carl Jackson

The turn to industry is a major theme of the Draft Political Resolution. That is not surprising since the turn to industry is a major theme in nearly everything the party leadership says. In fact, the turn has become something like an obligatory, ritual incantation suitable for nearly any occasion and purpose. Perhaps, instead of invoking the turn, it is time we studied it and thought about it.

In 1975 the Vietnamese won the war and the SWP turned to the working class. There is a relationship between these events. For years the anti-war movement had been the central organizing principle of party life. That is not to say that there were no other areas of political work. But the party was largely organized around the anti-war movement and the war had provided a focus not only for our work but for the broad radicalization underway in the U.S.

The end of the war posed a test to the leadership of the SWP which needed to find a way to lead the party into the post-war period. What would become the new focus of our work? How to continue our growth and the transition from one generation to the next within the party?

It was a matter of answering the classic question in politics -- what do we do next?

That year the leaders of the SWP proposed a turn "to the working class." Barnes, in his report on the '75 Draft Political Resolution given to the N.C. plenum in May of that year, said: "There are new political opportunities for the American revolutionary party in the mass movement and in the organizations of American labor. There are new opportunities for the party, necessitating a turn in our attitudes, consciousness, priorities, and modes of functioning. If there is a turn in the objective circumstances it is not enough to note it; the turn has to be reflected in the organizational functioning and priorities of the party." This is one of the earliest uses by a party leader of the word "turn" in this connection and there has been a more or less continuous history of "turning" since that time. Note, please, the calm tone of this early passage in which the turn is first appearing. Note, as well, the concern to connect the party's political practice to "the objective circumstances," and to "the mass movement." This is in

sharp contrast to the tone adopted by party leaders when speaking of the turn today. A note of strident self-righteousness seems to creep in, an ultimati- stic fervor that glosses over "objective circumstances" and seems almost hostile to "the mass movement."

Probably the single most memorable chapter in the early stages of the turn came with the division into smaller branches in '76. Everyone who was a member then will remember the rush to divide up into neighborhood "mini-branches." This maneuver was presented as part and parcel of the turn. We hoped to accelerate the process of rooting ourselves in the working class and linking up with the struggles that we saw coming and which we pictured as something like a series of "Bostons" (a reference to the struggle over busing which took place in Boston in the mid-seventies). It didn't happen. We were forced to give up the mini-branches which had not worked as well as the big, city-wide branches. It was not a disaster. Some damage was done but re- adjustment was still possible.

At about this time there was a development in the United Steelworkers of America (USWA) that we were becoming interested in. Ed Sadlowski, a progressive union bureaucrat, became director of the Calumet district of the union and began to attract attention as the leader of a movement in the union called Steelworkers Fight Back (SFB). SFB stood for union democracy and militancy against the business unionism of the labor bureaucracy exemplified in the no-strike pledge negotiated in the steel industry a few years before. We began to follow these events and to report them in the Militant. When SFB sought to become a national movement and Sadlowski began to look like a candidate for international office in the USWA we sought to intervene. We participated in the Sadlowski campaign and our fraction in the USWA became the first national industrial fraction in the party for a generation. The party convention in '77 approved a report by Joel Britton titled, "Party Tasks and Perspectives in the Labor Movement." Britton had some interesting things to say: "We have put the biggest emphasis on steel primarily because that is where the action is. The Sadlowski campaign offered us an opportunity and an obligation to work with politicizing union activists in a significant nationwide fight for union

democracy. In one of the largest industrial unions in the country...our members have gained respect as union builders and militants." The irony in repeating this today should be obvious. Anybody who spoke today about working with "union activists" and gaining respect "as union builders" would be out of step with the turn as it is practiced today. The idea of going "where the action is" has gone completely by the board. But Britton insisted on that point in '77. Later in the same report he said, "A few words on colonization of industry. We want to avoid any sort of schematic approach that would have us scattering our limited forces into all potentially important industrial unions. We're still a small party and there are a lot of big unions out there. We must concentrate our people where they'll be most effective. So we go where the action is." Note the reasonable tone of this passage, the reference to objective reality, the concern to link up with "the action." Isn't that just what's missing in today's approach to the turn?

Six months later, at the February '78 plenum, the NC approved a report by Jack Barnes titled "Leading the Party into Industry." The report began, "The Political Committee believes that this plenum must have one overriding goal: we must subordinate everything else to immediately organizing to get a large majority of the membership of the Socialist Workers Party into industry and the industrial trade unions...." That marked the beginning of what most comrades today think of as the turn. This is the turn that continues to dominate discussion of almost every question in the party. It may be useful to comrades seeking some perspective on the turn to note some aspects of Barnes' '78 report in order to get a picture of how the turn was seen at the time.

The turn involved a new evaluation of the overall political situation: "We are still in a preparatory period....But it is a preparatory period in which the center of American politics has shifted to the industrial working class."

The turn was not presented as a corrective for any weakness or petty bourgeois leaning or current in the SWP: "We are not proposing this move for therapeutic or hygienic reasons."

The turn was presented as a tactic, not dictated by any principle: "To accelerate the proletarianization of the party by changing the jobs of the major-

ity of SWP members is, of course, a tactical question. It's not the same thing as the historic proletarian orientation of the Socialist Workers Party, which has always existed and always will exist." (I leave those last three words without comment except to note that, obviously, any party can degenerate and any group of people can prove unworthy of their own ideas.)

The turn was not then presented as the all-consuming leveler that it later became: "This doesn't mean we won't do work in, or pay careful attention to, AFSCME or the teachers union....In fact, as we grow, we will recruit bigger fractions in the AFT, NEA, AFSCME, and so on. This does not detract from the importance of the work of our comrades there either."

It was asserted that the turn would lead to recruitment and growth: "If we carry this out, and get the big majority of the party into industrial unions... we are going to recruit."

Even at that Feb. '78 plenum the turn had not yet become what it is today, which is a permanent end in itself, a category, in the party's political work. The turn was still viewed then as a means to an end -- a way to build the party instead of a reason to build the party. That subtle shift was already underway by the spring of '79 when Jack Barnes, in his report to the April NC plenum, said: "Of course, a branch of industrial workers in any big city will attract and recruit workers who are not in industry....In fact, completing our turn into industry is the best road toward building the kind of party that will be attractive to all strata of the working class. But as these people become integrated into the party today, they too will want to be part of the turn." Note what has happened here. "Completing" the turn will attract more people to continue the turn. Recruitment to the party has turned into recruitment to the turn.

Today, nine years after the turn was first discussed and six years after the turn to industry, the party leaders still feel it necessary to note in the present Political Resolution that: "Under the present conditions, the sharp turn to the industrial unions is necessary." Note the present tense. How many years can a "sharp turn" last?

It has been seven years since we talked of going "where the action is." But the present Political Resolution

simply names the nine national industrial fractions without motivating any of them and notes that they've "become a basic part of the structure of the SWP." In short, a tactical decision about where to concentrate our forces has been institutionalized as "a basic part" of our structure.

Was the turn a good idea? Yes, of course. A successful revolutionary party in a country like ours must be built upon a deep involvement in working class life and struggle on a long term, day-to-day basis. Revolutionary Marxists need a link with the working class that goes beyond the intellectual and involves the living experience of the workers. If the turn means that we commit ourselves to the working class where we find it, in struggle, in victory or defeat, then the turn is a good idea.

The turn in the SWP was saying a bit more than these obvious points. For example, back in '78 it was declared that the "industrial working class" was "moving to center stage." There is a general, historical sense in which, for Marxists, the working class has always been at center stage since its appearance in history, locked there in struggle with the bourgeoisie. But on the level of practical politics the emphasis in that phrase should be on "moving." It is unquestionable that the movement is occurring as workers are driven to combat in self-defense. But it is an objective, ponderous, social movement which cannot be brought even one day closer by a turn in the SWP. That is not an argument against the turn. It is an argument for attentiveness to the objective, material world in which we must function and carry out our political tasks.

Another aspect of the turn in the SWP has been and continues to be the emphasis on the "industrial" working class. There are two senses in which a person can be said to be a worker. First, a person is a worker if he or she produces surplus value in exchange for wages. Second, a person is a worker if that person owns no means of production and must sell his or her labor for wages. All members of the first group belong to the second group but not all members of the second group belong to the first. We've limited our attention to "industrial" workers and defined that group very narrowly. That is a mistake. There was a time when the words "industrial working class" referred to almost

the same people as did the words "working class." That is not the case now when industrial workers no longer make up even a simple majority of the working class in our country. Those who argued for a turn to the industrial workers did so on the basis of the "social weight" of that group in society and, in general, they were right. Workers in the basic industries hold a largely dormant power beyond anything in history. That is a fact. It is also a fact that the increasing portion of the working class not employed in industry enjoys a greater and greater political weight and importance. In some cases they even hold greater social weight than some sections of the industrial working class. Can it be doubted that if the garbage collectors of a single major American city were to go on strike there would be more concern in the ruling class than if every garment worker did so? In New York City there is hardly a single group of industrial workers which holds the social or political weight of the hospital workers who have been involved, at this writing, for over a month in a bitter strike against their employers. Clearly, in New York City today, the hospital workers are "where the action is." It is not useful to introduce categories that divide the workers into industrial and non-industrial if that is to be read as socially weighty vs. lightweight, unimportant, or even qualitatively different from a class point of view. If we are to lead the working class in the suppression of capitalism and the building of a socialist future then we must start with the class as we find it. That's what a transitional program is for. A transitional program is a method for self-conscious intervention in history. It should not be abandoned in the service of schematism.

What does it mean to be a workers' party? Does it simply mean that a "large and stable majority" of the membership are workers? Surely not. A workers' party is so designated on the basis of its program as well as its

composition. In this sense the SWP was always a workers' party. The party presents itself to workers on the basis of its program, its defense of them and their interests. Why should a worker join a party just because its members are workers? She or he sees other workers all day long. A worker should join us because she or he agrees with our goals and how we plan to get there.

The manner in which the turn has been carried out has often been bizarre. Light-minded job-hopping has been elevated to a virtue, while serious attention to the daily tasks associated with building, preserving, and defending the trade unions has been decried as a serious error. Little or no attention is paid to specific situations and possibilities. "Targets" for colonization are selected nationally with little or no reference to actual conditions and opportunities in the field. Building garment fractions, for example, in New York City and a few other centers of this industry might be a good idea but to generalize this tactic nationally betrays a nearly Alice-in-Wonderland disregard for reality.

In fact, the manner in which the turn has been carried out, along with aspects of the majority faction's program, suggests a deep disrespect for and lack of confidence in the U.S. working class and the party's own rank and file. Surely, part of a turn to industry should involve a commitment to stay put there for a while and gain respect and confidence from fellow workers. Many workers will be interested in socialism and they will be more interested if we can offer plausible answers to humble questions like "what do we do next?" Our transitional program allows us to answer such questions with confidence.

A real rooting of our party in the American working class is just what we need to strengthen and ready ourselves for the future. The turn, as it is applied, is not accomplishing that. Instead, it has become a fetish, a flag in which the leadership wraps itself while it rewrites our program and history.

August 22, 1984

A GUIDE TO INACTION

by David Williams

The purpose of a convention political resolution is to provide an overall analysis of the class struggle and where the party stands within it at the time the convention is held. From this analysis the party can draw conclusions about what to do next in the inseparable tasks of advancing the class struggle and building the party. Its starting point is the international political and economic situation, which affects the lives of every worker and every political struggle in every country. It assesses the relationship of class forces on a world and national scale and even on a local or an industrial scale if that is necessary. It assesses where the revolutionary nucleus stands in its mission to construct a mass revolutionary workers' party capable of leading the proletariat and its allies to power. While it need not list in detail the tasks and priorities of the branches, any thinking party activist should be able to figure out what kinds of things he or she will be doing for the next two years should the resolution be adopted.

The most important requirement of a political analysis is that it be accurate. The facts must be stated; the conclusions drawn must follow logically from them. It must keep to its purpose: to guide revolutionists in advancing the class struggle and building the party. The political resolution adopted by the 1984 convention of the Socialist Workers Party fails on all counts. Its effect will be to disorient and confuse the activists of the SWP even further, as the Barnes leadership deepens its turn away from Marxist analysis, activity in the mass movement and the Leninist strategy of party building.

The strategic objectives of the SWP's work in the labor movement, as stated in the resolution, are as follows: working class solidarity, union democracy, and independent working-class political action. These are correct; they should be the strategic objectives of revolutionary work in the labor movement. They represent an as-yet-unbroken link with the SWP's Marxist heritage. The resolution states that labor must transform itself into a social movement, which fights against racism, sexism, and war. It states that the control of the unions should be wrested from the comfortable officials by the working ranks,

and that labor must break out of the stranglehold of the twin-party system.

The problem is that the resolution doesn't offer the least idea of how to struggle for these goals. In fact, the message one gets is that there is precious little anyone can do right now beyond "talking socialism" and selling literature, though the resolution does not explicitly say that. This, however, is not true. This is a period rich with opportunities for the revolutionary movement to grow and advance the struggle of the working class. The Barnes gang, however, has so misanalyzed the period that the party is missing opportunities at every step.

Part of the problem is that the authors of the resolution simply didn't do their homework. The factual errors are many and serious, and they lead the party off the track. An example is their discussion of the "gender gap." One wonders where the authors of the resolution have been making their observations if they think that the gender gap is a myth. It is real, and it has nothing to do with voting for Mondale, though Mondale is certainly trying to exploit it. At this time, for many complex reasons, women are against war in greater numbers than men; women in trade unions have strong union consciousness in greater proportions than men. All one has to do is engage one's coworkers in political discussion to see the difference in attitude between male and female workers. The Bolshevik slogan, "Turn to the woman worker" is particularly appropriate today, but one sees no suggestion of practical ways of doing that in this resolution.

The analysis of the middle class is particularly baffling: "Tens of millions of people in the middle class and professional layers also directly benefit from government social policies, tax breaks, and support for the employers' antilabor offensive. The evolution of the parasitic capitalist economy has bred millions more lawyers, business executives, supervisory and management personnel, insurance and banking executives, real estate speculators, medical profiteers, high-salary salesmen, and specialized merchants pandering to the quickly-acquired expensive tastes of the well-heeled" (p. 16).

One wonders, who are these "tens of millions"? Does capitalism in its de-

cline really make more narrow the sectors of the population which the revolutionary working class can influence and win over? If the numbers of middle class people who benefit from the offensive against labor have increased, where did they come from? The only logical place they could come from is from the working class--in which case any worker with her or his head screwed on right is going to take advantage of the upward mobility that has suddenly reappeared in the period of the death agony of capitalism. A sensible worker would certainly not be terribly interested in the ideas of someone who comes into the plant to "talk socialism"--especially using as examples countries where generalized poverty is still the norm, in spite of the great strides they have made since their revolutions. If, in fact, capitalism in its advanced stages can provide workers with a chance to improve their standard of living for any prolonged period then all our theories are bankrupt and we should say so and disband.

Though no trend in history is completely linear, we can say conclusively that Marx's prediction--that the petty bourgeoisie would become increasingly absorbed by the proletariat, and that the proletariat would become increasingly impoverished--has been borne out in practice. The professions are unable to absorb all of the university graduates. Some professions--such as engineering--are becoming proletarianized as the technological revolution has made the process of industrial production more sophisticated. Engineers running automated production systems are replacing assembly-line workers in some industries; in others production is exported to countries where cheap labor is plentiful. Capitalism in the U.S. needs fewer assembly-line workers and more janitors and dishwashers. It certainly does not need more lawyers--as any recent law graduate can attest! Even bourgeois commentators are acknowledging that the trend is the opposite of what the resolution describes--downward mobility, not upward, and outright poverty for workers in increasing numbers. What an opportunity is opening for the revolutionary movement! What a crime that the SWP leadership is missing it!

What the authors of the resolution offer in the way of a guide to action is either a series of vague generalities ("we actively participate in struggles on the job . . .") or predictions of the long-term future ("Working people will wage big class battles, which will be met by the rise of mass fascist movements . . ."). Under a major heading,

"War and Revolution in Central America and the Caribbean: the Center of World Politics," there is not one suggestion of what can be done to build antiwar coalitions, involve labor in the struggle against possible U.S. intervention, or what tactics are appropriate in the anti-intervention movement today. This omission is in a resolution which takes a position on the internal debate within the Salvadoran revolutionary movement. This is a guide to action?

There are other questions facing working people and our comrades in industry: what is an effective strategy to fight layoffs and organize the unemployed? Is the shrinkage of manufacturing industry and the growth of service industry a permanent trend? If so, what to do about it? How should we relate to different sections of the trade union bureaucracy?

The present upturn in the business cycle is raising immediate questions: What, if anything, should we be doing in preparation for negotiations and a possible strike in the auto industry? Should members of our union fractions participate in scale committees as contracts expire? What are our general guidelines on when to compromise and when to strike? Is there anything besides lunch-break conversation we can do to advance the idea of a labor party, of specific changes in the unions to give the ranks more decision-making authority, or solidarity with struggles of other unions and even for workers in struggle in other parts of the country or the world?

What is the current state of the Black liberation struggle? Of the struggles for self-determination of other oppressed nationalities? What is happening in the women's movement? How can the revolutionary party participate in these areas?

Party-building activists will find nothing useful in this resolution, nothing which will aid them in their work. This resolution is a guide to inaction. It deepens the turn to sectarianism and abstention from real struggles going on in the United States. It confirms the SWP in its line of march away from Trotskyism and party building. It has been adopted by the SWP convention, but the discussion will continue on it in the coming months. It is hoped that serious party-builders will be able to raise criticisms of this resolution and remain members of the SWP. It is to be hoped that their criticisms will convince others and begin the process of returning the Socialist Workers Party to a correct political course.

A COMPLETELY ONE-SIDED ANALYSIS

by Steve Bloom

Section two of the Political Committee Draft Political Resolution presented to the 1984 SWP convention is entitled "War and Revolution in Central America and the Caribbean: The Center of World Politics." This title reflects a theme of the SWP majority's approach for the last three years. In many ways, of course, it is correct to see the Central American revolution as a focal point of political developments in the world today. But in the sense used here, this statement means rejecting an understanding and evaluation of other aspects of the international class struggle in their own right--even one as crucial for the world revolution as the upsurge of Solidarnosc in Poland. In addition, the rich, two-way, interaction of events in Central America with those in the rest of the world has been consistently ignored by the present SWP leadership.

Nowhere is this approach more clearly demonstrated than in this document. On the surface, it might seem strange for the SWP's political resolution to devote one-fourth of its space to Central America and the Caribbean. Usually in the past, political resolutions have dealt with the problems and campaigns of revolutionary Marxists in the United States. They have discussed the broad international scene as a means of placing those problems in their proper context, but our approach toward specific international questions were discussed in separate resolutions. In 1981, however, the leadership broke with this tradition and presented a single large resolution which dealt with all aspects of the domestic and international class struggle.

We will not discuss the pros and cons of such an approach, or the reasons why it was undertaken in 1981. What is important for the moment is the striking contrast between the 1981 resolution and that presented to the membership and adopted in 1984. In 1984, far from covering all aspects of the international class struggle, the question of the Central American revolution was the only international question taken up in any detail (a few are discussed in passing--in a sentence or two--in different sections of the resolution). And there was no point on the agenda of the SWP convention, and no separate resolution, to discuss any other international questions. The upsurge in capitalist Europe,

Poland, the Middle East, etc., were not deemed worthy even of a cursory discussion by the party leadership or by the delegates to this gathering.

One-sidedness

This section of the resolution, like the resolution as a whole and like the general methodology of the SWP leadership today, is characterized above all by its one-sided nature. The Central American revolution, like all other phenomena in this less-than-perfect world, is a contradictory development. Revolutionary Marxists, even more than other students of history and politics, require a rounded and comprehensive understanding of such developments. But there is no hint of this in the SWP political resolution.

This leads to statements which ignore serious political problems. Under the sub-heading of "Strengthening Proletarian Internationalist Leadership," for example, the resolution declares: "At the same time, the Cubans have resolutely combatted those, even among their 'friends,' who fail to understand the role of aid from the Soviet workers' state to the Cuban revolution. They have refused to allow any wedge to be driven between Cuba and the Soviet Union."

Is this really all that needs to be said on the subject of the relationship between Cuba and the USSR? Isn't it relevant that the Cubans' refusal to "allow any wedge to be driven" between themselves and the USSR includes their active political support to the Jaruzelski government against the Polish workers and peasants? Ever since 1959 the SWP has recognized "the role of aid from the Soviet workers' state to the Cuban revolution" and the importance of such aid for the survival of that revolution. But in the past we have also recognized that this aid came with political preconditions, and therefore had a contradictory character.

Earlier in the same section, the following words appear in a discussion of Cuba: "For the first time since the Russian revolution, the world revolution made a mighty advance under the leadership of forces that developed outside the Stalinist Communist Parties and that are truly internationalist. A historic stride is being taken toward resolving the crisis of proletarian leadership on a world scale."

Again, isn't there more that needs to be said? Has this "stride toward resolving the crisis of proletarian leadership on a world scale"--which we all agree took place with the victory of the Cuban revolution, and which was extended in Nicaragua and Grenada--resolved all of the organizational and programmatic problems created by the hegemony of Stalinism (and to a lesser extent Social Democracy) in the international working class movement for more than 50 years? What are the limitations of this process? Are these limitations purely objective, or do they also reflect the subjective limitations of Castroist ideology? All of these questions have been essential for us in the past; but they are, apparently, no longer relevant for the SWP Political Committee.

Grenada

Another prime example of this resolution's one-sidedness is the continued failure of the SWP leadership to come to terms with the causes of the Coard coup in Grenada. It does go further than the extremely superficial analysis presented previously--for example in Steve Clark's introduction to the book Maurice Bishop Speaks--and even begins to discuss the real heart of the matter when it explains that the Coard faction "could have been overcome only by drawing into the leadership of the government, the mass organizations, and the party the most conscious and combative leaders stepping forward in the mass organizations and in the workplaces."

This is certainly true. And we might add that it was not only a question of developing such a broad leadership out of the mass movements, but of involving the masses themselves in the revolutionary decision-making process. But the essential question is why this did not take place and how this state of affairs might have been corrected. The resolution blames it on the fact that "the Coard group gained control of the party apparatus and placed its own supporters in key governmental posts, especially in the army officer corps. It thus guaranteed that the emerging revolutionary vanguard of the workers and farmers would be only minimally integrated into the leadership of the revolution."

From 1979 until the time of the Coard coup, the majority leadership of the SWP refused to recognize any problem

with integrating the "emerging revolutionary vanguard," or the masses as a whole, into the "leadership of the revolution." In fact, they attacked anyone in the SWP and the Fourth International who tried to raise such questions as "hostile to the Grenadian revolution" and "capitulating to the pressures of the imperialist war drive." Grenada was presented as a model of the democratic integration of the masses in a revolutionary process. So the new acknowledgment that there was a serious problem here is a step forward (though typically we do not find any attempt to reconcile this with what has been said in the past).

Nevertheless, in trying to blame the problem solely on the maneuvers of the Coard faction, the SWP leadership does not solve its difficulties, but only trades one set of problems for another. They still cannot adequately explain how a small group of a few dozen "secret factionalists" was able to overthrow a revolutionary leadership which could mobilize tens of thousands of supporters, unless they are also willing to discuss why that leadership failed to realize the dangers and mobilize that support in time to avert disaster. They also must discuss the inherent structural problems which kept the masses from expressing their will outside of the New Jewel Movement when it was no longer being expressed through the leadership of that organization.

The resolution draws attention to the similarity between the functioning of the Coard faction in Grenada and the development of a grouping headed by Anibal Escalante in the early years of the Cuban revolution: "Had the Cuban revolutionary leadership not been able to smash this factional operation, what happened in Grenada would have happened in Cuba twenty years before." It would be instructive for the SWP leadership to follow through on the contrast between what happened with Escalante and with Coard. It was precisely the timely action of the Castro leadership in taking the fight with Escalante to the masses of the Cuban people that enabled it to defeat this threat to the revolution.

Phantom polemics

Another interesting feature of the SWP draft political resolution is its occasional polemics against positions which do not seem to have any supporters--at least none are mentioned, and this

reader could not recognize them as being held by any known person or group. Perhaps the drafters of the resolution hoped that the party ranks would assume that these were positions held by the minority in the party--which has now been expelled and cannot speak for itself in the internal debates--and that by presenting them in this way they could avoid the accusation of engaging in false polemics. It is strange, nevertheless, to observe this debate with pure phantoms.

The most remarkable of these appears in the section we are discussing: "The development of these vanguard forces [the internationalist leaderships in Cuba, Grenada, Nicaragua, and El Salvador] has also undermined racist myths, including one prevalent in the working-class movement -- that revolutionary leaders in the Third World would never understand Marxism as well as, or be capable of implementing a communist strategy on as advanced a level as, white Europeans and North Americans. According to this view, nationalist leaderships that are less than Marxist are as good as the peoples of Asia, Africa, and Latin America can expect." If such a view is really "prevalent in the working-class movement" then surely at least one example would be worth citing.

Perspectives for the anti-intervention struggle

One essential element of overriding importance--the fight against U.S. intervention in Central America--is hardly mentioned in the resolution. The heading "Working-class axis in the fight against imperialist intervention" contains four scant paragraphs, which talk about efforts to mobilize the American people against the Reagan administration's war moves as if they were something for the future, not an immediate struggle for

today. The sole activity projected for the SWP is to "participate in" demonstrations organized by others, and "advance them along an axis of maximizing participation by the labor movement in the fight against U.S. intervention."

This approach fails to project the fundamental task for the revolutionary party in the United States today, of taking the initiative and trying to provide leadership for the struggle against imperialist war--organizing whatever sections of the population can be mobilized at the present time, while of course doing all we can to raise consciousness about and within the working class and the unions (as we did during the anti-Vietnam war movement). The present SWP leadership has developed a schema according to which no antiwar struggle can develop in this country until there is a massive commitment of U.S. ground troops. They have consistently refused to recognize the possibility and necessity of mobilizing that sentiment which exists right now--and which is massive within the U.S. population--in order to lay a basis for the kind of movement that will be necessary if and when the U.S. actually invades Central America.

* * *

The ratification of this section of the resolution--and the resolution as a whole--by the convention can only mean a continued disorientation for the party, a continued abandonment of our revolutionary program, a continued tailing after the Castroist leadership internationally and after the initiatives of others in this country--in the antiwar and anti-intervention movements as well as in other areas of the class struggle. The alternative is for the SWP to renew its confidence in itself as the revolutionary party in the United States, and in the historic program of the world Trotskyist movement.

SWP ORGANIZATIONAL NORMS: FACT AND FICTION

by Evelyn Sell

One section of the Political Committee Draft Political Resolution for the recent SWP national convention deals with "Applying the party's organizational norms." Beginning with the very first line, it presents a false picture of SWP norms and traditions.

Fiction: "The SWP is becoming more the kind of party that is able to apply in practice the proletarian norms adopted at our founding convention and most recently codified by the 1965 convention."

Facts: The founding convention adopted norms which were reaffirmed and spelled out in more detail by resolutions in 1940, 1953 and 1965. They all presented a consistent attitude toward internal SWP democracy -- but the current party leadership has pulled out some quotations to emphasize the limitations on the rights of the membership to engage in thorough-going discussions of disputed political views. The 1938, 1940, 1953 and 1965 resolutions all include the same sentence: "Party membership confers the fullest freedom of discussion, debate and criticism inside the ranks of the party, limited only by such decisions and provisions as are made by the party itself or by bodies to which it assigns this function."

The 1965 resolution devoted a great deal of attention to the basic rights of minorities, tendencies and factions. Some examples:

"To safeguard party unity in debating and deciding policy, a conscious effort is made to teach comrades to argue out problems on the basis of principles and to act always from the standpoint of principle. Along these lines the party has developed in a free and democratic internal atmosphere. All individuals and tendencies have a full chance to contribute to the development of the party and to the shaping of its leading cadres."

"We are guided by the Leninist concept of relative internal homogeneity based on loyal adherence to the party's program and principles and voluntary acceptance of its discipline. These qualities enable the party to maintain internal stability and to function dynamically in its public activity, even though conjunctural political differences arise. Ample room is provided for the expression of dissident views, even major ones of serious import. The right to organize tendencies and factions is safeguarded. All the leadership demands is that every member be loyal to the party's program and principles and be disciplined."

"As a combat organization the party strives for political homogeneity in the sense that admission to its ranks requires fundamental agreement with its program and principles."

Note that "loyalty" is defined as loyalty to the party's program and principles -- not to the leadership's line or pronouncements. Note the Leninist concept of "relative political homogeneity" -- not political homogeneity period as demanded by the current SWP leadership. Also, political homogeneity is defined as "fundamental agreement with its program and principles." Note that the "right to organize tendencies and factions is safeguarded."

All of these Leninist concepts and norms have been violated by the current leadership of the SWP which has repeatedly banned the formation of tendencies and factions, postponed the constitutionally-required national convention to avoid discussion and debate, and

then expelled those who had expressed dissident views on false charges of disloyalty. The "disloyalty" was not, however, framed in relation to party program and principles but to decrees and methods of the leadership.

Fiction: The second sentence on organizational norms presents a completely false history of the party: "Leadership of the retreat that began shortly after World War II included consciously loosening the application of these norms."

Facts: The proletarian norms of the SWP were not, in any way, loosened -- on the contrary, they were strongly reaffirmed in 1953 when they were challenged by the Cochranites, and again upheld in the early 1960s when they were challenged by the Robertson-Mage-White and Wohlforth-Philips groups.

The 1965 resolution explains the need for codifying once again the organizational norms of the SWP. To quote just a small portion:

"In the course of the discussion representatives and defenders of the Robertson group advanced views which the party leadership, in its overwhelming majority, consider at variance with our basic concepts of party organization and procedure. It thus becomes imperative to clarify, once again, the Leninist concept of democratic centralism to remove whatever confusion has arisen on this score and to amplify, in the light of the current controversy, our basic ideas on party organization."

It was the proletarianization policy on jobs that was "loosened" and then changed --- not proletarian norms. The bosses barred many political activists from factories, ships, mills, etc. The witch-hunt was used as a further weapon against revolutionaries. Even so, a number of SWPers remained in industry and active in unions during the 1950s and 1960s. The party's jobs policy was dropped consciously when the SWP began to contact and win over youth following the 1956 crisis of Stalinism and the rise of a Left Wing Caucus in the Young Socialist League in 1957. The fusion of these youth with the SWP resulted in the founding of the Young Socialist Alliance in 1960.

Both the preparatory period before the formation of the YSA and the earliest years of the YSA were marked by experimentation and hotly debated differences over the organizational norms of a youth group and over the relations between the party and the youth organization. As the YSA developed, its organizational norms were indeed "tightened" and became more and more like those of the SWP. Due to the overlapping membership and the close political relationship of the SWP and the YSA, this loosening and tightening was fought out in both the party and the youth organization at the same time.

Fiction: "The adoption of the 1965 resolution reflected the determination of the party to bring to an end the deliberate loosening of the application of our proletarian norms once an improved objective situation made it possible to do so."

Facts: The 1965 resolution was different from those of 1938, 1940 and 1953 in some respects -- but not in the way presented by the Draft Political Resolution. All three previous resolutions stated:
"...the party seeks to include in its ranks all the revolutionary, class conscious, and militant workers who stand on its program and are active in building the movement in a disciplined manner."

The 1965 resolution, responding to developments in the struggles of Blacks and the upsurge in student activism, changed the formulation to: "...the party seeks to include in its ranks all revolutionary and class conscious militants from the labor, civil rights and student movements -- all opponents of capitalism -- who are prepared to stand on the Trotskyist program and be active in building the movement in a disciplined manner."

The 1940 and 1953 resolutions demanded that "all student and unemployed youth must be sent into industry and involved in the life and struggles of the workers." This was not included in the 1965 resolution. Also dropped were all sections covering the jobs policy, rooting the membership in the unions and workers' mass organizations, assigning all members who were not workers to activities in labor organizations, etc. The 1965 changes did not make the party any less proletarian in the Leninist meaning of that term since the program, perspectives and principles remained proletarian to the core.

The 1940 and 1953 resolutions called for the same "tightening" which the present SWP leadership attributes to the 1965 document. All three resolutions state, word for word the same: "Conditions, both external and in the internal development of the party, demand that steps be taken towards knitting the party together, towards tightening up its activities and centralizing its organization structure."

Note that "tightening" refers to activities and "centralizing" refers to organization structure -- not to norms or political program. The 1984 Draft Political Resolution proposes "political centralization" and speaks of "politically homogenizing the party." Truly "1984!" Very different from the concepts adopted and then repeatedly reaffirmed by the SWP.

There are many more distortions and lies in the Draft Political Resolution's section on organizational norms. Everyone sincerely concerned about the true facts should read the documents, compare them, place each in its historical context, and judge for yourself.

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THE INTERESTS OF THE MASSES IN THE IRAN/IRAQ WAR

by Robert Sorel and David Weiss

The Socialist Workers Party's continued support of Khomeini's Islamic Republic in its war with Iraq is most recently expressed in Cindy Jaquith's article "U.S. left and the Iraq-Iran war" (Intercontinental Press, May 14, 1984). In her analysis she lashes out at the "U.S. left" for the following: 1) characterizing the war as "a means of diverting attention from the failings of the Islamic Republic at home" (In These Times, March 14-20); 2) blaming Iran for its refusal "to negotiate an end to the war" (Guardian, March 14 issue); 3) claiming that the war "is fought over strictly bourgeois interests" (Workers World, February 23); and 4) calling for the "overthrow of the Khomeini regime" (Daily World, March 28). (These left publications do deserve criticism, but on entirely different grounds.)

Jaquith also denounces those who characterize the Khomeini regime as a repressive anti-democratic theocracy, not because she can deny these charges, but because, as she says, the Iranian government's fight against "Hussein and Washington" is part of the "international fight against imperialism and the struggle to advance the world socialist revolution." Therefore, its attacks on democratic rights should not be "seized upon . . . as a rallying point."

Comrade Jaquith also grants that "The Iranian rulers take advantage of the war situation to further their own interests. . . . But," she argues, "the Iranian workers have their own class interests to pursue in the war. . . . Iranian workers will be in a stronger position to defend democratic rights, social and economic gains, and national self-determination if they can defeat the Iraqi aggression and return their country to peace . . ." (pp. 287, 289).

But has not the Iraqi aggressor already been defeated? This is the crucial point to which Jaquith turns a blind eye. She argues as if the war was still being fought on Iranian soil. The fact, known to the whole world, but not mentioned once by Comrade Jaquith, is that Hussein's invasion of Iran has been successfully repulsed. It is now Iran which is invading Iraq with the avowed aim of replacing the Iraqi government with an Islamic clerical-bourgeois "republic" such as is being fastened on the Iranian masses today.

The crux of the matter is that the

character of the war has changed. From a defense of the Iranian revolution against the imperialist-inspired Iraqi invasion of Iran (a defense in which the interests of the IRP government and the masses conjuncturally converged for a specific task, and which was correctly supported by class-conscious workers the world over) to a war of conquest, with the goal of foisting an Islamic "Republic" upon Iraq.

Would such an Islamic victory serve the interests of the workers, peasants, and other toiling masses in Iran and Iraq? Will they be "in a stronger position," as Jaquith contends in her article, "to defend democratic rights, social and economic gains, and national self-determination"?

A look at the record of the Islamic "republic" shows a negative correlation between the consolidation of its power and the gains of the Iranian masses. These gains were tremendous: workers' and peasants' shoras (councils) sprang up in the cities and rural districts; factories and plants whose owners had fled the country were occupied by the workers; peasants began taking over the land they had been tilling all their lives; and freedom of expression and assembly with the proliferation of varied political parties and organizations began to change the entire face of Iranian society. But all these gains have now been eroded, and are in the process of being completely destroyed by the Islamic regime under the pretext of defending the revolution. An Islamic victory in Iraq will result in further strengthening of the clerical-capitalist rule over the Iranian masses, and the extension of this repressive rule to the Iraqi masses.

This conclusion is dictated not only by the record of Khomeini's Islamic regime in Iran. There is in addition to this decisive factor an Islamic principle on which the Ayatollah bases his perspective, according to which wars are fought not over specific class issues, and not in the name of the oppressed who directly fight them--demagogic references to mostazafin (the wretched of the earth) aside--but for puritanical, abstract, religious issues, and in the name of Islam and God. If you win the war, the credit goes to Islam and God, for it was God who brought you victory. And if you die you will be rewarded in

the afterlife. Khomeini's emphasis on the "anonymous soldiers" and martyrdom, not heroism, and his occasional (but cautious) uttering of the idea that "we didn't make the revolution for the sake of bread and butter, but for the sake of Islam" truly testifies to this principle. It serves to downgrade the real interests and social weight of the revolutionary oppressed masses, if not to nullify them altogether.

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In his Discovery of Secrets (written in 1944) the Ayatollah Khomeini states: "The clergy insists that this shameful unveiling [of women] . . . has wracked both spiritual and material damages upon our country in gross violation of the laws of God and his prophet. The clergy insists that this melon-shaped [men's] hat, a foreign leftover, is a disgrace to the nation of Islam, forbidden by God and damaging to our independence. The clergy insists that these coeducational schools, mixing young girls and lustful young boys, destroy chastity and manliness. . . . By God's decree the drinking and selling of wine are forbidden, and these places should be shut down. They also insist that music creates a mood of fornication and lust, undermining chastity, manliness, and courage--it is forbidden by religious law and should not be taught in schools lest it promote vice" (1971 Persian edition, pp. 213-14).

It is the concern for these issues and, more importantly, the fear of the erosion of the clergy's powerful social position as a result of the secularization of their traditional tasks which explains Khomeini's "anti-imperialism."

Jaquith considers his anti-imperialism a "reflection" of "the internationalism and anti-imperialism of the Iranian masses," which is shown "by many of the stands the Iranian government adopts on foreign policy": establishing "friendly ties with the Nicaraguan government," recognizing "the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front of El Salvador," calling for the "dismantling of the colonial-settler state in Israel," speaking out "against apartheid in South Africa and British colonial rule in Ireland," and supporting "struggles by workers in imperialist countries" (pp. 288-89).

It is all well and good for the Iranian government to be against British rule in Ireland, but more important is its imposition of bloody theocratic rule

over the Kurds and other national minorities in Iran. Again, if the Iranian government "has supported struggles by workers in imperialist countries," well and good. But first we would like to know where, when, and how it has done so; and second, hasn't it launched a savage attack against the Iranian workers? Isn't this more decisive?

Diplomatic posturing should never be mistaken for anti-imperialism. Imperialism has a specific material base: bourgeois property relations. Ayatollah Khomeini's rule has not (and cannot) disturb this base because of its ideological commitment to defending sacrosanct private property. Within the present world capitalist mode of production the growth of these property relations in Iran can only occur in subordination to and dependency on foreign imperialism. Not only the inherent internal laws of capitalist development prove that Ayatollah Khomeini is not anti-imperialist (which is not to question his sincere hostility to the "Great Satan"). His insistence on the continuation of the war "until the overthrow of Saddam," and his program to internationalize Islamic rule, benefits imperialism economically, militarily, and politically.

Economically, the reduction of the oil production of both Iran and Iraq in the face of the oil glut on a global level has helped its price stability, and hence prevented the profits of oil companies from falling. Furthermore, the war has channeled a higher proportion of petro dollars of the countries in the region, especially the two warring countries, toward the arms producers which are, in the main, giant military complexes in the west. The war has also raised the profits of insurance companies dramatically.

Militarily, the war has provided favorable grounds for ever more U.S. intervention and entrenchment in the area.

Politically, Ayatollah Khomeini's fervent anticommunism, his government's ruthless repression of the Iranian left, and its hostility toward the Afghan government along with its friendly relations with the Turkish and Pakistani governments are in the best interests of imperialism. Indeed, after the overthrow of the Shah, no other government than that of Ayatollah Khomeini could have accomplished this.

That is why it is safe to say that

the leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini and his Islamic Republican Party has proved to be a blessing in disguise for imperialism. The SWP's position either does not see, or else ignores, the dialectics of the contradictory relationship between imperialism and the Ayatollah's regime: despite Khomeini's hatred of the "Great Satan," his social and economic policies are benefiting imperialism. And despite imperialism's hatred of the Ayatollah, under the circumstances (lack of a viable pro-imperialist alternative which would prevent the revolution from radicalizing, or the country from disintegrating), it is not for the overthrow of the Ayatollah's regime by Iraq.

The New York Times Op-Ed page, August 23, 1984, under the subhead "For a unified stable Iran under the Mullahs" features an article by Shireen T. Hunter, deputy director of the Middle East program at Georgetown University's Center for Strategic and International Studies, in which he states that, "The West should realize that none of the secular opposition groups offer workable alternatives to the mullahs . . . who enjoy the support of the powerful merchant class and segments of the religious middle classes. The moderates have checked the radicals' attempts to alter Iran's economic system and have diminished the influence of the secular left, even dismantling the Communist Tudeh Party. . . . Instability [in Iran] would result in civil war and the disintegration of the country or in the establishment of a pro-Soviet, Leftist regime. . . . We must not be blind to the moderate clerical faction struggling to take up the reins of power."

This is only one of many such imperialist insights appearing in the bourgeois press.

* * *

The 1979 revolution was not the first time that the clergy utilized the anti-monarchist, anti-imperialist wrath and power of the Iranian masses for its own purpose. Around the turn of the century, a mounting popular discontent with the monarch's political and economic policies converged, on the one hand, with the threat posed to the clergy's parasitic social role by the development of capitalism, and, on the other hand, with the threat that international market forces posed to the interests of the native merchant community. This convergence of interests resulted in an alliance which brought about the victory

of the Constitutional Revolution in 1906.

Despite the fact that the clergy played a prominent role in the Constitutional Revolution, "it should be emphasized that from 1907 onward, eminent Shi'ite clerics began to realize one by one that, despite their indispensable role in mobilizing the masses and their ceremonial prominence, the directing spirit was that of Westernized intellectuals, a spirit which posed a serious threat to their vested cultural and material interests. The large majority of the religious dignitaries supported the restoration of autocracy in 1908, but judiciously withdrew from the royalist camp once the failure of the attempt became evident in 1909. By 1911, the Shi'ite clergy had become disillusioned with constitutionalism and were predominantly hostile to it" (Said Amir Arjomand, "Shi'ite Islam and Revolution in Iran," Government in Opposition, Vol. 16, No. 3, Summer 1981, pp. 297-98).

Ayatollah Musavi Shirazi, a close ally of Ayatollah Khomeini, expressed this hostility toward constitutionalism in the following words: "In reality, constitutionalism was only a game, and the foreign [powers] launched it to bring about the separation of the spiritual powers and government. The cause of all the calamities of the country is this very constitutionalism" (Ibid).

Indeed, it was the clergy's abstinence from the support of the gains of the Constitutional Revolution in the face of the monarchy's trampling upon them that shifted the popularity and prominence of the leadership from the clergy to the secular opposition, and brought the national bourgeoisie headed by Mossadegh, and the left headed by the Tudeh (Communist) Party, to the forefront of opposition to the monarchy in the period following the Constitutional Revolution. And it was under the leadership of this secular opposition that the Shah was overthrown in 1953 as a result of mass uprisings against his rule.

Unfortunately, the clergy's suspicion of parliamentarianism, its fear of and hostility towards the growing influence of the Tudeh Party, and hence its betrayal of the nationalist government of Mossadegh (in combination with Tudeh's betrayal of the Iranian workers, peasants and their allies) led to the victory of the 1953 CIA-sponsored coup and the return of the Shah after his flight to Rome.

The disillusionment of the clergy with secular parliamentarianism after the Constitutional Revolution shifted the leadership of the masses from the clergy to the secular opposition. But with the success of the 1953 coup and the degeneration of the Tudeh Party and National Front, the initiative within the opposition returned to the clergy. This became clear in the June 1963 uprising in which Ayatollah Khomeini played a leading role.

Ayatollah Khomeini's first open opposition to the Pahlavi monarchy appeared in his 1944 book, The Discovery of Secrets (Kashf-al-Asrar). This book, in essence, expresses the clergy's dissatisfaction with Reza Shah's abrupt centralization of state power and his reforms which suddenly limited their control of the vast majority of legal, educational, and welfare institutions. These reforms included: creation of a secular national education system; creation of a secular, state-controlled judicial system; creation of a ministry of endowments, which curtailed the role of the clergy in administering welfare institutions; etc. "Even in the arena of social services, the construction of new hospitals, baths, libraries, orphanages, and so on . . . top state bureaucrats were now recruited not from the madrasa (traditional religious schools) but from the university or those sent abroad on government scholarships" (A. Tabari, "The Role of Shi'ite Clergy in Modern Iranian Politics," Religion and Politics in Iran, N. Keddie editor, Yale University Press, 1983, p. 63).

In his The Discovery of Secrets, Ayatollah Khomeini lays out ideas and principles of an Islamic society which he would elaborate on in his 1971 book, Velayat-e-Faqih (also titled Islamic Government). They were eventually put into effect after he skillfully won the leadership of the 1979 revolution. Some of the legal, political, ethical, and administrative principles that Khomeini formulated in The Discovery of Secrets are: 1) "No one but God has the right to govern over anyone or to legislate." 2) A true Muslim should only, "obey God, His prophet, and those in authority." "Those in legitimate authority" are either Imams or, in the absence of Imams, Viceregents of the Hidden Imam, Fagihis, those most knowledgeable in the Islamic laws. 3) Majles (parliament) "should be composed of the pious faquihs or be placed under their supervision."

4) The existing secular Ministry of Justice must be eliminated and be replaced by the Islamic law and courts, because this would eliminate costly lawyers' fees and, "if you want to eradicate theft from the world, you must cut the hands of thieves, otherwise your prison sentences will only help thieves and perpetuate theft." 5) Coeducation and the teaching of music must be eliminated because they "create lust and vice, and undermine chastity, courage, and manliness" (pp. 184-85, 274-75, 296-301).

Ayatollah Khomeini's promise of an Islamic utopia in The Discovery of Secrets was ignored by the Iranian people, and the Ayatollah himself remained an isolated figure. Instead, the masses rallied behind the secular opposition led by Mossadegh and the Tudeh Party, whose opposition to the monarchy and imperialism was not based on abstract, puritanical and ethical issues, but over issues of economic independence, democratic rights, as well as issues of a class nature. The fact that the Iranian people did not follow Khomeini at that time and, instead, followed the National Front and the Tudeh Party shows how the enemies of the Iranian revolution are wrong in their assertions that the Iranian masses are simply "religious fanatics."

But the clergy in general, and Ayatollah Khomeini in particular, learned from this experience. They learned that their opposition to the Shah on the basis of abstract theological themes and ethical principles would not arouse the masses against him, and that in order to rally the oppressed against political and economic injustice and tyrannical misrule, their cause must be taken up. Thereafter, the clergy's opposition to the monarchy became increasingly blended with a considerable measure of populism and demagogy. This "political maturity," as a prominent cleric put it, meant, for example, a hypocritical defense of women's rights. More than anywhere else, the clergy's "political maturity" is reflected in Ayatollah Khomeini's later writings and pronouncements. This is why, as A. Tabari points out, Khomeini's 1971 book, Velayat-e-Faqih, in contrast with The Discovery of Secrets, "is both a statement of program and a manual for activists: . . . he outlines a program of struggle for the establishment of an Islamic government." As a necessary

first stage he proposes a period of propaganda and education amongst the masses, concentrated not so much on traditional theological themes as upon the political, economic, and legal doctrines of Islam, in order to create a social current so that the conscious, pious, and dutiful masses would gradually organize themselves in an Islamic movement, would rise up and form an Islamic government" (Tabari, op. cit., p. 71).

Ayatollah Khomeini's "political maturity" reached its highest degree of demagoguery during his 1977-79 calls from Paris upon the Iranian masses to rise up against the tyranny of the Shah. We remember how in his radio and television interview in Paris, he made overtures toward the bourgeoisie while claiming to champion the interests of the oppressed. He even promised equality between men and women, adding that he would be against imposing the veil on women. But this demagogic pose of defending the interests of the Iranian masses was fraught with contradictions and dangers for the clergy.

Soon after the overthrow of the Shah, the Ayatollah and his associates realized that this was only the first step toward the establishment of their Islamic "republic," and that in order to consolidate their power, the mass demonstrations that overthrew the Shah had to continue. This was a very delicate task, for the Shah was now gone, and the masses who overthrew him wanted to reap the fruits of their fight against the monarch and his imperialist backers, which was in direct conflict with Khomeini's perspective.

Such a situation provided an opening for the renewed development of a secular revolutionary pole that would truly champion the interests of the Iranian workers and peasants--a revolutionary Marxist party--as the contradiction between the clergy's words and deeds became manifest. Such a party could only have been organized in opposition to Khomeini's Islamic Republican Party and by promoting the independent political organization of the masses to defend their own interests. The inability of any working-class leadership to fulfill this task was decisive in the ability of Khomeini to consolidate his grip on the reins of government.

Of particular importance here was the continued betrayal of the Tudeh Party--the party that had a significant

mass following. When, after the overthrow of the Shah, Ayatollah Khomeini set out to implement his Islamic principles, the Tudeh Party and its cothinkers both inside and outside Iran not only did not raise any objections to them, but supported them as part of their support to the "Imam's line." They thus added treacherously to the Iranian masses' illusions in the Ayatollah's Islamic utopia. This betrayal by Tudeh of the Iranian workers and peasants was decisive in the process of consolidating Khomeini's reign of terror. It was justified with explanations of the "anti-imperialist stance" of the revolution, "national unity," the "anti-imperialist character of the Imam's line," etc. Tudeh's subservience was ultimately rewarded by Khomeini with the vicious extension of the terror to Tudeh itself.

Of course, the overthrow of the Shah did (and does) not mean that the fight against imperialism and its counterrevolutionary forces was over. But Ayatollah Khomeini was (and is) in no way ready to hear the masses demanding the price of their sacrifices. His task, and that of his government, was (and is) to divert the attention of the workers, peasants, and their allies from demanding the fruits of the revolution. This is why he called Saddam Hussein's original invasion of Iran a "blessing." And this is also why despite the successful repulsion of Saddam's forces from the soil of Iran, the Ayatollah insists on the continuation of the war.

Not only does the Ayatollah need the war as a means of diverting the attention of the Iranian workers and peasants from their own domestic struggle, but also for another equally important reason: to carry out his mission of internationalizing Islamic rule, to legitimize his claim to this messianic mission and to increase the credibility of his leadership.

* * *

The SWP leadership counterposes "the international fight against imperialism and the struggle to advance the world socialist revolution" to an independent defense by the Iranian workers and peasants of their own class interests. Such an approach will not advance the cause of anti-imperialism or socialism. It does, however, provide cover for the colonial and neo-colonial national bourgeoisie, who disguise their maneuvers in "anti-imperialist" and even "socialist" rhetoric in order to divert

the attention of the workers and peasants from the class struggle in their own country--and the possibility that the working class itself can take power. It is not by subordinating the interests of the workers and peasants to

Khomeini's war that we will advance the anti-imperialist and socialist struggles. Only the conquest of power by the masses in Iran, under the leadership of the working class, can truly lead to independence from imperialism.

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STATEMENT OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

Foreign troops out of Grenada!

Hands off the gains of the Grenadian masses!

[The following statement was adopted by the United Secretariat of the Fourth International by majority vote at its meeting of May 10-14.]

* * *

1. The seizure of power by the New Jewel Movement (NJM) on March 13, 1979, started to destroy the semicolonial bourgeois state in Grenada, which is located in the Caribbean, a strategically key area for American imperialism. Gairy's small army and police force were completely destroyed. This process progressed constantly towards a situation in which only the nominal ex-governor survived, completely stripped of political power. A revolutionary regime was set up and a process of social revolution was started.

The forms and rhythm of these revolutionary transformations were largely determined by the objective conditions on this small island:

- Extreme dependence on imperialism;
- Small and extreme lack of resources;
- Great weakness of the proletariat (only a few thousand stable industrial workers) side by side with a large layer of small peasants;
- A relatively large layer of semi-proletarian layers (unemployed, marginal, temporary/short-term workers, etc.).

Despite these very unfavorable starting conditions, the relatively weak political organization of the population at the beginning, and the continuing destabilization efforts of imperialism and its allies in Grenada and the region, the revolutionary regime in the space of a few years was able to bring about a series of impressive gains for the toiling masses:

- Chronic unemployment was radically reduced from 50% of the work force (and 70% of the women) to 12%, while in the rest of the Caribbean the basic tendency is in the opposite direction;
- Over three consecutive years an impressive annual rate of growth of nearly 4% was achieved (3% in 1980, 3% in 1981, and 5.5% in 1982), the supply of running water was increased by 100%, an effort was made to begin to develop agricultural cooperatives and a start was made in planning the economy;

- An important agrarian reform was initiated;

- A vast education campaign meant the number of illiterates fell to 3% of the population, the percentage of school-age children benefiting from secondary education went up from 11% to 36%, and a plan was drawn up for achieving universal secondary education before the end of 1985;

- The poorest 30% of the population were exempted from taxes;

- Progress in the housing field with the renovation of some 18,000 houses, affecting nearly three-quarters of the entire population;

- Introduction, with the revolutionary help of Cuba, of a free health service for the whole population accompanied by a 100% rise in the number of doctors.

In addition to this economic and social progress, there were similarly impressive advances in democratic rights for the masses:

- Mass trade unionization of agricultural and unskilled workers, trade-union membership tripled to 90% of all wage earners on the island;

- Democratization of the trade-union structures, with regular general meetings, election of leaders, opening of trade unions' accounts to any member wishing to consult them;

- Rapid growth of women's and youth mass organizations which quadrupled in membership, and the setting up of a small peasants organization;

- Setting up of embryonic organs of mass self-organization (zonal councils and workers parish councils) that had the power to submit the action of ministers, high-ranking civil servants, and directors to their control and disapproval. They also discussed proposed legislation and the national budget before it was adopted. The Bishop team had a project of transforming these councils into genuine organs of political power;

- Building people's militia.

The rhythm adopted for the collective appropriation of the means of production was relatively slow, and the priority in economic diversification was given to the development of tourism by the building of a modern airport. This was fundamentally due to the backward objective conditions of the country and not to weaknesses or errors of the revolutionary leadership. Under such circumstances, no alternative orientation would have led to better results.

Therefore, these conditions weighed heavily on the economic choices made by the revolutionary leadership as well as on the possibility of establishing a democracy based on councils. The absence of proletarian tradition worked in the same direction.

2. Imperialism considered the formation of Maurice Bishop's revolutionary government as a serious threat, despite the small size of Grenada. This hostility, which was immediately and continually expressed by destabilization operations, was basically due to the following factors:

- The changes taking place in Grenada were likely to favor the extension of the revolutionary process to other Caribbean islands and neighboring countries in a period of sometimes explosive instability due to the economic crisis (Jamaica, Dominican Republic, Surinam, etc.);

- The risk of a Grenada-Nicaragua-Cuba axis and the constitution of an international force of attraction for the masses in this region of the world;

- The fact that Maurice Bishop's government was the first revolutionary government established in a Black, English-speaking country, which imperialism thought could well stimulate a process of radicalization in other parts of the world (North America, Great Britain, Black Africa).

Consequently, imperialism used a dual counterrevolutionary tactic:

- Preparation of direct military intervention by U.S. imperialism, allied with some of its puppet regimes in the region;

- More underhanded pressure, accompanied by limited aid granted under political pressure, from European imperialists to try to progressively "neutralize" Maurice Bishop's revolutionary government.

3. The military intervention of U.S. imperialism and its puppets represents the destruction of the state created after the March 1979 victory (councils, people's army, militia, administration) and the return to colonial juridical institutions. Therefore, it is the victory of a social counterrevolution. It is a grave defeat inflicted not only on the Grenadian masses but on the overall revolutionary process in the Caribbean and the neighboring countries of the region. The initial consequences of this defeat are already making themselves felt — by the temporary consolidation of the reactionary regime in Jamaica, by the break with Cuba by Bouterse's regime in Surinam, and by the creation of a small counterrevolutionary "relay" army in the English-speaking Caribbean around the U.S. intervention forces.

However, the defeat of the Grenadian revolution is not a crushing military dictatorship type of defeat. Imperialism and its puppets are having difficulty in eliminating all the gains of the masses won between March 1979 and October 1983. Centers for mass resistance have been set up. The New Jewel Movement maintains a certain continuity around the initiative of a few survivors of the Bishop leadership. U.S. imperialism is obliged to "moderate" repression due to the disapproval its military operation has run into internationally and even in the United States. Furthermore, the test of

strength underway between the revolution and the counterrevolution in Central America, and the ongoing mass struggles and mass explosions like the one that occurred at the end of April 1984 in Santo Domingo, puts real limits today on the effects of U.S. imperialism's counteroffensive.

It must be noted that this imperialist military intervention did not lead to a military confrontation with all the anti-imperialist forces — both for the reasons outlined by Fidel Castro as well as for more profound objective reasons. It would be irresponsible to reproach the Cuban leadership for this.

Undoubtedly, the risk of having to stand up alone to the U.S. military might well influence the strategy of many revolutionary organizations in the immediate future. The way out of this impasse is the extension of the revolutionary process in the region based on the ripening of *internal* revolutionary crises in each country.

4. The victory of the social counterrevolution in Grenada, unleashed by the military intervention of U.S. imperialism, was facilitated in a decisive way by the seizure of power by the Coard faction of the NJM in October 1983, which overthrew Maurice Bishop's revolutionary government. The Coard faction which carried out this political counterrevolution was an authoritarian and substitutionist faction of a Stalinist type, whose bureaucratic orientation appeared clearly in the immediate measures which totally removed the toiling masses' possibility of exerting political power:

a) Hefty wage increases were granted for the army (among civil servants similar measures were proposed for party fulltimers).

b) The militia began to be disarmed.

c) It was decided to act against popular feeling expressed massively in the demand for the release of Maurice Bishop (in the council meetings, petitions in the workplaces, strikes, demonstrations, etc.).

d) There was firing on the big October 19 mass demonstration.

e) The deliberate assassination of Maurice Bishop and his closest collaborators on the orders of the Coard faction of the Central Committee and party. The soldiers were only acting on these orders.

f) The declaration of a state of emergency and the imposition of a curfew which in practice meant the neutralization of the councils and militia.

All this went in the direction of a growing militarization of the country. These measures profoundly traumatized and demobilized the Grenadian masses and meant they were incapable of responding vigorously to imperialist aggression. It even resulted in at least a fraction of the masses seeing this aggression as a lesser evil compared to the fear of an increasingly authoritarian regime installed by the Coard faction.

It is important to correctly characterize this faction as a Stalinoid one in order to understand why, even totally isolated from the masses, it nevertheless opposed the imperialist in-

vasion, had its army fight the invaders, and is today subject to imperialist repression.

We must denounce that repression and these abuses of the reactionary regime in Grenada while demanding that Coard and company answer for their crimes before a people's tribunal.

5. The fact that the Coard faction was able to develop inside the NJM, was able to win the majority of the Central Committee and take over the leadership reflects the type of social-economic pressures any ruling revolutionary organization is subject to in a backward country. It also shows the pernicious influence that the Soviet bureaucracy can exert either through its direct intervention or through its objective weight, its example and its ideological influence over political currents without great experience.

The opposition of the Coard faction to the Bishop group cannot be fundamentally explained by Coard's personal defects, his arrogance, personalization of power, or by intrigues, the use of a "secret faction," "cliquist mentality," not to speak of the hypothesis of manipulation by imperialism and the maneuvers of "enemy agents." This split reflected, given the above-mentioned pressures, two diametrically different conceptions of relations between the party and the state, between the leadership of the party and the masses, between the party and masses — two different conceptions of the internal structure of the party itself. These different conceptions reflected, in a historical sense, even if only embryonically, divergent social interests, those of the proletarian masses on the one hand and those of an incipient bureaucracy on the other hand.

Furthermore, the conflict between the Coard and Bishop groups was not a recent phenomenon. Coard was a member of the Workers Party of Jamaica, a hyper-Stalinist group, and was a faithful supporter of it in the 1970s when he set up the OREL. Later OREL was dissolved into the New Jewel Movement but remained a current with another political project.

The survivors of the Bishop tendency are themselves today conscious of the necessity to examine the causes of the Grenadian revolution's defeat. They say it is a subject for discussion and debate that will last for years.

The fact that they approved the rule whereby differences that emerged (which had been the case for at least the final year) inside the Central Committee should not be presented to the party rank and file nor to the masses, undoubtedly weakened the Bishop group and facilitated the bureaucratic faction's victory.

In a revolution like the one which had developed in Grenada, it was difficult during the first stage, for obvious objective reasons, to organize the majority of the working people in their workplaces and into bodies of political power independent of the party. The NJM itself only had a few dozen members. The seizure of power had not, strictly speaking, been preceded by a mass movement bringing about through its actions a dynamic of control and

self-organization, although it immediately led to an impressive mass mobilization, mass activity, and mass organization under the impulse of the revolutionary government.

Under the circumstances, an immediate separation of party and state bodies, given the extreme narrowness of cadre, was further very difficult. In these conditions, the NJM as a whole was bound to undergo, to varying degrees, substitutionist pressures to carry forward the revolutionary process. The conflict which broke out inside the NJM expressed a qualitative differentiation in the response to be given to such social and political pressures.

So, the tragic experience of the Grenadian revolution confirms the vital importance for the consolidation of a revolution of an articulation between institutionalized workers power, a correct conception of the party/state relations, and a Leninist concept of building the party (extension of proletarian base, free political discussion, capacity to launch public discussion related with key interests of masses, etc). Such an articulation, far from holding back the exercise of power by the proletariat or the consolidation of its dictatorship, is an indispensable guarantee for the safeguarding of this power both against the bourgeoisie and imperialism and the dangers of a bureaucratic process. It avoids the masses being taken by surprise by events as happened in Grenada.

The Grenadian tragedy must also help to reinforce the education of revolutionary militants throughout the world on why violence should never be used against the masses or between revolutionaries to settle political differences.

6. The main task of the Fourth International, given the victorious counterrevolution in Grenada, is to participate in the international solidarity movement with the Grenadian masses and revolutionaries against American imperialism and its puppets and to explain the reasons of the defeat, in which the Coard faction's seizure of power played a key role. We will do all we can to build this.

- Foreign troops out of Grenada now!
- Hands off the gains of the Grenadian masses!

- Immediate and unrestricted restoration of democratic rights for the masses!

The Fourth International also participates in the international movement of solidarity with the Grenadian working-class organizations and the Maurice Bishop and Martyrs of October 19th Foundation and works to defend them against any repression attempted by the reactionary regime established in Grenada. It will seek to alert its audience among vanguard layers to the increased dangers of counterrevolutionary military intervention against the Central American revolution, the Sandinista revolutionary government, and Cuba. □

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DOUG JENNESS MANGLES THE CARL SKOGLUND STORY

by George Breitman

August 4, 1984

Poor Doug Jenness--despite his eminence as a member of the SWP's central leadership team, he gets the crummiest assignments. "Go forth, rediscover and rehabilitate the American farmer." Forth he goes, rediscovering and rehabilitating to the best of his ability. "Get after Trotsky, show how he underestimated the peasantry and how his left-centrist program in 1917 would have led to the defeat of the Russian revolution." No sooner said than done.

We don't know if Jenness welcomed those tasks or merely accepted them in the way a model member of the central leadership team should. But how he felt about his latest assignment--an 8-page article about Carl Skoglund in the August ISR (part of the August 3 Militant)--is unmistakably clear from the article itself. Through its tone, style and content the article tells us that Jenness had no interest in Skoglund outside of (1) wanting to use the subject to promote the factional interests of the central leadership team and (2) wanting to stretch the article as long as possible (in accord with the central leadership team's belief that the longer an article is, the "more important" it is).

Skoglund was a worker most of his life and a revolutionary for 55 years. His political activity spanned early years of the Second International, all the revolutionary years of the Third International, and the first 22 years of the Fourth International (he was a member of the FI's first international executive committee). Not only the man but the whole movement underwent great changes in that period, which helped to shape the movement of today. Skoglund's biography is therefore rich in valuable lessons for our time and for the future, as Dave Riehle indicated in his excellent article, "A Life We Can Learn From: Carl Skoglund (1884-1960)," in Bulletin IDOM No. 5, April 1984.

But there is no room in the tight little world of the central leadership team for the concept that proletarian leaders develop and grow. If "their" Lenin knew everything in 1905 and never had to make a correction in later years, as they seem to contend, then of course Jenness can't be bothered tracing the actual development and growth of a leader like Skoglund. What he offers instead is a "tribute" in stereotypes and cli-

ches that have little to do with the flesh-and-blood Skoglund.

As a result, what Jenness does on the hundredth anniversary of Skoglund's birth shouldn't happen to a dog. Overall, he has transformed something rich, educational and inspiring into something boring and drab, which many will have trouble reading to the end. Along the way he commits numerous distortions because he's too uninterested or too lazy to check facts in the SWP's possession. He shows appalling ignorance about things he pretends to know something about(1). He discourages further research in some areas of Skoglund's life by supplying guesses and presenting them as though they are facts(2). He helps himself to research work done by people whom he carefully does not list in his "acknowledgments"(3) and totally disregards research available to him whenever it contradicts his assertions. And he resorts to outright falsification when he thinks it will benefit some factional claim or ploy of the central leadership team.

Actually, Skoglund is not a happy or congenial subject for the central leadership team. A worker from the age of 13, he always saw life and society through the eyes and mind of a worker. He didn't need to be pressured into going into industry--he would have starved if he hadn't gone. In the 1930s he was a leader in the campaigns to proletarianize the SWP, which was accomplished through political education and persuasion as well as personal example, and not by coercion and threats resorted to by the present central leadership team when it got panicky because things weren't proceeding as fast as they had expected at the end of the 1970s, shortly after the start of the current turn to industry. Skoglund spent most of his life searching and working to find openings for the revolutionary party to engage in class struggle activity so that it could acquire the experience and authority to win the leadership of the workers' struggle for power.

The central leadership team, on the other hand, is the least proletarian component of the SWP today. Its main figures have never been near an industrial job--which may explain why their efforts to proletarianize the party utilize so many of the methods typical of petty-bourgeois radicals. Unlike

Skoglund in any of the phases in his long career, they have been busy the last few years seeking excuses and rationalizations to convince the SWP membership that there is nothing it can do in the class struggles of today except sell the Militant to a very small number of "vanguard workers." The central leadership team does not know or care much about Skoglund, but one thing it knows is that if the SWP members learn about Skoglund's real role as a party-builder always on the lookout for new openings, they might be inspired to ask embarrassing questions about the abstentionist form of the politics being promoted by the central leadership team.

But if this is true, then why does the central leadership team bother with Skoglund at all--why doesn't it just ignore the whole subject, as it did before the Jenness article? Because for the central leadership team the Skoglund anniversary has been a factional football for over three years, down to last week. Space limitations prevent telling anything here except a very short summary, but that should be enough in this case.

In the spring of 1980 I called the SWP leadership's attention to the 1984 dates and the chance for us to commemorate both the Skoglund centenary and the 50th anniversary of the Minneapolis teamster strikes. I also asked that while the leadership was considering this possibility I and other SWP members should be authorized to collect information, reminiscences, photographs, etc., that could be used for the proposed 1984 commemorations. The SWP leadership granted us the authority to collect material but took no position on what to do in 1984.

For the next two years some of us did research, depositing copies of everything with the SWP. In the meantime, the central leadership team classified me as an oppositionist; after that, everything related to the Skoglund project, or any other project I or any other oppositionist showed interest in, was regarded with suspicion by the leadership. In August 1982 I sent the leadership a series of recommendations for national and local commemorations in 1984. All my proposals were practical and feasible in my opinion and all would have contributed to building the party. My letter was not even acknowledged for 13 months. Then Jenness told me orally my recommendations had been rejected as

unrealistic, too much trouble, etc. From then until after I was expelled from the SWP in January 1984, nothing more was heard of the Skoglund project.

That probably would have been the end of the story except that in February 1984 the Swedish section of the Fourth International proposed a joint U.S.-Swedish celebration of the centenary, with joint tours, etc. The Swedish offer was not addressed to the SWP alone--it was also sent to the Fourth Internationalist Tendency and Socialist Action. For this reason the SWP leadership rejected the Swedish proposal and nothing else happened on a national scale. Finally, supporters of the F.I.T. and S.A. and others in the Twin Cities decided they wanted to have a local celebration, even if the SWP would not participate. So they arranged a meeting for July 28, one week ago. With the help of the Swedish section they got as their main speaker Kjell Östberg, a member of the Swedish section and a special researcher into Skoglund's Swedish period.

Before reaching the Twin Cities, Östberg stopped in New York, where he hoped he could persuade the SWP leadership to participate in joint celebrations. There he was met by Jenness, who told him the SWP leadership was willing to let Östberg speak on Skoglund at the SWP educational conference starting in Oberlin today alongside of the SWP convention. When Östberg phoned from Minneapolis a few days later to confirm details about the promised class at Oberlin, Jenness told him the class would be held only if Östberg disassociated himself from all aspects of the July 28 meeting in the Twin Cities. When Östberg replied that he could not do this without violating the instructions of his own party (to cooperate with the F.I.T. and S.A. as well as the SWP), Jenness answered that in that case there would be no Skoglund class at Oberlin and, furthermore, Östberg would be barred from Oberlin entirely, even as an observer, if he spoke on July 28. Östberg did speak in the Twin Cities, there is no Skoglund class slated for Oberlin as of this date; and Östberg was directed not to come close to Oberlin.

This shameful episode sheds all the light that is needed on the central leadership team's real attitude to Skoglund. Once the Swedish section entered the scene it became more difficult to ignore the issue and the forces advocating commemoration. The decision to have

the July 28 meeting with Östberg's participation in the Twin Cities strengthened this factor. It would "look bad" if others, slandered as enemies of the SWP were publicly paying tribute to the proletarian tradition personified by Skoglund while the SWP sat off on the side and ignored it. This explains both why the SWP leadership felt it had to "do something" at the last minute and why it was done so poorly.

The biggest lie in the Jenness article (it should be called that because it was done intentionally rather than through ignorance or indifference) concerns the policy of the Communist League of America, which was founded in 1929 by James P. Cannon, Skoglund and others following their expulsion from the Communist Party as supporters of Trotsky.

The facts are well known (and were never disputed in more than 50 years before Jenness's article): The CLA designated itself a faction of the CP and the Comintern, dedicated to reforming them--that is, restoring them to the path of Leninist internationalism and proletarian democracy. From 1928 to 1933 they consistently demanded to be readmitted to the CP and Comintern, and they steadfastly rejected any proposal to build a new party to compete with the CP. It was only in 1933 and later that they changed this perspective and began to build what later became the SWP and FI.

Jenness turns this upside down. Immediately after reporting the founding of the CLA in 1929, his new version goes like this: "The CLA started charting the course toward building a new party based on the program of the first four congresses of the Communist International. While it paid attention to winning members from the CP, the CLA had no illusions about being readmitted to the CP, nor did it press for readmission. Rather it began the fight to build a new party based on the Marxist program" (p. 12, col. 2).

To see how new this version really is, we advise readers to turn to the SWP's own book about the CLA. It is Cannon's The Left Opposition in the U.S. 1928-31 (Monad Press, 1981), published as recently as three years ago after very careful scrutiny by representatives of the central leadership team. The editor, Fred Stanton, says in his intro-

duction on page 22:

"The CLA [which operated as an expelled faction of the party] saw the CP as the revolutionary party in this country, and the Comintern as the revolutionary International, despite their bureaucratic leaderships. The league [CLA] was oriented toward the revolutionary workers in the party, the only large group of revolutionaries there was. To abandon them to the bureaucrats, to turn away from the CP before exhausting all possibilities of reforming it, would have been a light-minded and sectarian act. The CLA set out to become the vanguard of the vanguard workers in the CP."

Until now, SWP members have always been taught that Cannon, Skoglund and the others did not abandon the revolutionary CP members to the bureaucrats and that they did not turn away from the CP "before exhausting all possibilities of reforming it." As Stanton puts it, the founders of our movement would have been guilty of light-mindedness and sectarianism if they had failed to exhaust all the possibilities, which they kept doing for almost five full years. But Jenness now says in effect that they did fail to exhaust all the reform possibilities, that they turned their backs on the CP workers, and that they were correct in doing so.

I must admit that I have no completely satisfactory explanation for this lie by Jenness. All I am sure of is that it has some factional connection with the current crisis in the SWP and the fact that many people unjustly expelled from the SWP are "pressing for readmission" in the SWP, just as the CLA did with the CP and the Comintern from 1928-1933. Perhaps Jenness thinks his lie will convince SWP members that we are not acting in the true Cannon-Skoglund tradition?

Whatever the central leadership team's motives are, this episode underscores the contempt that it displays for the SWP members as a whole; it seems to think that it can tell the members any lie, without proof or logic, and that the members will continue swallowing these lies forever. And when you measure how much SWP history has been rewritten by the central leadership team since 1981, you can't help wondering what it will be telling them about SWP history three years from now.

FOOTNOTES

1. Not having 8 pages in the ISR as Jenness did, we can give here only a few of many examples. Jenness tries to explain the Foster faction and the Cannon faction in the CP and the shifting relations between them from 1923 to 1928. Almost every word he writes on this is wrong or misleading, although the facts are well documented in books by Cannon and Theodore Draper.

2. Since the U.S. government harassed Skoglund for decades because he never became a U.S. citizen, researchers have wondered why he did not apply for citizenship in 1916, when he first became eligible. They don't have to wonder any more because Jenness airily disposes of the question by asserting that "by then he was working on the railroad and never

got around to taking time off from work to go through the necessary paperwork and interview." Perhaps some day Jenness will take time off and reveal what little birdie confided this to him.

3. The best and fullest research on Skoglund in his U.S. years prior to the big Teamster strikes (1911-34) was done by Dave Riehle, then a member of the SWP in the Twin Cities and now a member of the F.I.T. Jenness uses this material collected by Riehle, after a fashion, but cannot bring himself to "acknowledge" this particular source. Jenness similarly had access to the remarkable research on Skoglund's Swedish years (1884-1911), done by Kjell Östberg in Sweden.

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TO DEFEND TROTSKYISM MEANS UNDERSTANDING REALITY

In Defense of Revolutionary Continuity, by Dianne Feeley and Paul Le Blanc, Socialist Action pamphlet, San Francisco, 1984, 75 pages, \$4.00

A pamphlet defending revolutionary continuity has to do much more than just show who was right in various disputes in the past and demonstrate who is in line with the letter of the classic works of Marx and Lenin. Revolutionary continuity means showing how revolutionary theory has been able to explain new and unforeseen developments in the world revolution. The aim of theory is to place the thousands of facts that make up world reality into a coherent order and then to enable one to work out the main laws of motion of a situation. Having analyzed the world around us, revolutionary Marxism provides the basis for intervening to change that reality in the direction of working-class victory. A successful defense of revolutionary continuity, then, means showing that a theory has not only been able to explain reality, but has also been able to develop itself by negating those aspects of it that were one-sided, integrating new experiences and data into its overall view, and in so doing preserving its essential core.

This is the way in which one must approach the current discussion inside the Socialist Workers Party and Fourth International. That discussion revolves around one central question: has the theory of permanent revolution and its organizational corollary, the building of the Fourth International, been confirmed or bypassed by world economics and politics?

This is the discussion that Dianne Feeley and Paul Le Blanc, who are members of Socialist Action, throw themselves into in their excellent new pamphlet. Their aim is to prove that "There is no reason to abandon the theory of permanent revolution in the age of permanent revolution" (p. 64).

The great value of their pamphlet is that they do not confine themselves to a textual duel with the Socialist Workers Party leadership, in which the essential question is solely a study of the texts and showing who has a quotation as their precedent. Their emphasis is on using facts to prove their arguments is one grounded in Marxism. Engels explained that ". . . principles are not the starting point of the investigation,

but its final result; they are not applied to nature and human history, but abstracted from them; it is not nature and the realm of humanity which conform to these principles, but the principles are only valid in so far as they are in conformity with nature and history. That is the only materialistic conception of the matter . . ." (Anti-Duhring, Moscow, 1954, p. 54). These same concerns led Trotsky to say that "We Marxists are interested, above all, in facts." ("The Belgian Dispute and the De Man Plan, Writings (1934-35), New York, 1971, p. 211).

In Defense of Revolutionary Continuity is a reply to Jack Barnes's 1983 article "Their Trotsky and Ours: Communist Continuity Today" (New International, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1983). Barnes's ideas are the rejection of permanent revolution in favor of Lenin's pre-1917 theory of the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry (which he calls the workers' and farmers' government) and the opinion that the ideas of the Cuban Communist Party are the basis for a new international.

The pamphlet begins by sketching out Trotsky's general theories of combined and uneven development and of the interconnected nature of the world revolutionary process. It then shows how these theories are exemplified by the world situation today. The same procedure is used with Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution. First the theory is explained, then it is shown how the Russian and Chinese revolutions tested and proved the theory.

The pamphlet also looks at Jack Barnes's ideas themselves. It demonstrates how these ideas are simultaneously the cause and effect of the deep crisis which the SWP is in today. Barnes's ideas are shown to be based on a dishonest portraying of both Lenin's and Trotsky's actual writings. A lengthy passage from Stalin is quoted showing the striking similarity between Barnes's new thinking and one of its theoretical predecessors.

A clear contrast emerges between two currents. On the one hand, there are the tired repetitions about "Trotsky underestimated the peasantry," "only ultra-lefts confuse the socialist and the national democratic revolution," etc., etc., started by Stalin, repeated by Karl Radek, Kostas Mavrikis, Mikhail

Basmanov, Carlos Rafael Rodriguez, and picked up today by Doug Jenness and Jack Barnes. On the other hand, we have the actual dynamics of Trotsky's thought, the reality of twentieth century revolutions and the partial and empirical theorizations of that reality by the Chinese, Yugoslav, Vietnamese and Cuban leaderships. Finding out how all this is covered in just 75 pages should be an added incentive to buying and studying this pamphlet!

Why is this pamphlet so important? Why should so much time be spent responding to ideas that are so unoriginal and dated? The answer is simple. The unfortunate reality is that these ideas are not only those of the majority of

activists attempting to build a revolutionary party in the U.S. today, they are also a component of the ideology of the leadership of one of the most momentous events in the world today: the Central American revolution.

Establishing a revolutionary Marxist beachhead in America means, first and foremost, answering these ideas. A successful response to this challenge will enable us to provide the theoretical basis for future intervention and party-building. It will also demonstrate the relevance of the ideas of the Fourth International to the Central American revolutionaries and their many followers in this country. In Defense of Revolutionary Continuity is a very welcome contribution to this task.

Reviewed by Adam Shils

A TIMELY STUDY GUIDE

Handbook for Marxist Studies, Prepared by Evelyn Sell. A Fourth Internationalist Tendency publication, New York, 1984, 56 pages, \$5.00

By its nature this handbook is an unfinished project. In her introduction the editor explains its purpose and why it must remain forever incomplete, "presented in a format which allows for the easy insertion of additional materials as needed over time." Its purpose is to aid the education of revolutionary socialists. It is designed for party organizers. Most of the examples are selected from the educational activities of the Socialist Workers Party. The editor draws heavily on her own 35 years' experience in the party as a rank-and-file member, teacher, organizer, journalist, press agent, and candidate for public office.

A central purpose of the revolutionary party is education. Until the 1984 SWP convention the party's constitution stated essentially that "the purpose of the party shall be to educate and organize the working class for the abolition of capitalism and the establishment of a workers government to achieve socialism." A substantial change this year reads as follows: "The purpose of the party shall be to educate and organize the working class for the establishment of a workers and farmers government leading to the abolition of capitalism and the achievement of socialism." The timeliness of Evelyn Sell's

study is underscored by this seemingly insignificant change in the party constitution which can be properly understood and appreciated only by those who want seriously to study the Marxist laws of social change.

Sell firmly believes that there can be no education without organization and action. She begins by explaining why and how revolutionary socialists study Marxism. She reviews the types of educational activities developed by the SWP since its founding in 1938. These include summer vacation schools, leadership training schools, socialist summer schools, educational conferences, educational classes at branch meetings, study classes organized by party branches, public forums under party auspices, and individual studies. Each of these different activities is briefly described and illustrated. Without close attention to the special uses of each it might appear that there would surely be some overlap. But the distinctions and uses of these different educational activities are clarified by examples from SWP history. A 1968 leaflet from the Detroit Friday Night Socialist Forum advertises two lecture series, one on the Cuban revolution given in three talks on successive weeks and the other on Black Nationalism in five talks. Such talks are addressed to a broad audience. They can be given by a variety of speakers, some expressing conflicting viewpoints. Public forums of this kind are usually

educational, almost always a spur to further study.

Individual studies, often neglected, are a necessary part of the education of a revolutionist. Sell's guide has an excellent section on this, including questions to oneself, a basic reading list and a more comprehensive list of references. Anyone who masters this material will be well versed in the fundamentals of Marxism.

The scope of party educational activities over the years, as listed and described by Sell, throws a new light on party history. Some aspects of our past are revealed that were hardly noticed before. We now see how educational activities changed over the years in accordance with the changing times and the needs of new generations of recruits. Vacation schools were popular in the 1940s and '50s. Organized regionally, vacation camps accommodated comrades' families and their sympathizers in all sections of the country. Sell describes these schools on the West Coast and in the mid-West. The West Coast School originated in 1935 in the Socialist Party and never missed a season for more than 30 years, until it ended in 1967.

By the mid-60s, however, the changing political situation "gave rise to two educational institutions which continued until the late 1970s: the socialist summer schools and the weekend educational conferences." These efforts were "nationalized," says Sell, in 1965 "...after the SWP Political Committee established the post of National Educational Director." Change was inevitable. By 1979 the workshop on education at the SWP national convention that year heard reports from various branches about classes on Trotsky's History of the Russian Revolution, Marx's Wage Labour and Capital and Value Price and Profit, and on Marxist philosophy. But this changed immediately following the 1981 party convention. "The SWP National Committee took a direct rôle in organizing classes at the branch level. The study of Lenin's writings was set as a national project."

The change in the character and quality of education at the party's leadership training school was equally drastic at about the same time as the change at the branch level. Sell quotes a paragraph from Cannon's Letters from Prison in which he explains his concept of a party school system. "At the base of the school system is the basic-train-

ing class for beginners; at the apex is the national fulltime training school for party functionaries which should rightly bear the name of the genius-teacher who founded our movement--The Trotsky School." Cannon's plan was never fully realized. But the first session of the leadership training school--The Trotsky School--began in 1950. The last session ended in the winter of 1962-63. After a 16-year lapse, a new leadership school was projected, to begin in early 1980. But the new school was different, with a different name. Instead of The Trotsky School it was called Sandstone University, after the prison where Cannon and other SWP leaders were incarcerated in 1944 for opposing World War II. These facts, among a raft of others, are reported by Sell in her summary of SWP educational activities. It is not within the purview of her handbook to underscore the contrast between party educational activity before 1980 and after. The Trotsky School which had been a liberating institution was converted into a schematic prison house, the germinal pen of anti-Trotskyism in the SWP. The infected products of Sandstone were sent to the party branches to teach classes in "Leninism."

While using the educational activities of the SWP for her basic material Sell necessarily draws upon the history of the radical movement because much of the standard educational practice at the party branch level had its antecedents in the early socialist and communist movements. All radical organizations from the pre-World War I Socialist Party of Eugene Debs to the Stalinized Communist Party of Earl Browder in the pre-World War II years had their educational departments and published Marxist study guides. The Stalinist version was a gross distortion of the Marxist tradition, but it was further distorted by the 1960's "new left" generation. Nearly all the radical sects and cults that sprang up at that time attempted some form of educational program, however haphazard or rigid in execution.

Sell's guide points the way to the serious education of revolutionists in our contemporary world. She offers a sober and practical approach to the problem. She is a teacher by training and profession as well as a revolutionist. Her handbook is filled with useful teaching techniques and helpful hints from the classroom that every branch organizer and party educational

director ought to pay careful attention to, such as her samples of a "survey sheet to determine educational needs," a "checklist for educational activity," an "information sheet for chairperson," etc. Such mundane matters may seem far removed from the Marxist dialectic, but serious students will soon learn that a certain amount of routine and discipline is necessary to grasp the laws of dialectical logic.

The only comparable guide (and this only by contrast) in the bourgeois educational system is The Left Academy: Marxist Scholarship on American Campuses, edited by Bertell Ollman and Edward Vernoff. These guides (theirs and Sell's) are separated by the gulf of social classes. That gulf can be overcome by serious study coupled with revolutionary activity, as the history of Marxism demonstrates.

Sell's guide ought to be welcomed by all committed revolutionists, especially SWP members and ex-members because of the peculiar methods of miseducation introduced by the present crop of SWP leaders. Her sample student guide, suggestions for teachers, and outline of a 3-class series on the Communist Manifesto (at the end of the handbook) are rich rewards for the price of the book, and a fitting conclusion for all that goes before. This alone ought to inspire the reader/user of this guide to a Marxist education to supplement the sections on study conferences and Marxist studies that remain to be filled in by tomorrow's students of the Marxist classics.

Reviewed by Sarah Lovell

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LETTERS

Editor:

Weinstein: "Is there any rethinking going on in the PC concerning our view of permanent revolution, that Trotsky perhaps was wrong after all?" Clark: "The answer is No" (SWP Discussion Bulletin, Vol. 27, No. 9, June 1981).

The capital "N" in "No" is Steve Clark's. All he disagreed with in his article was "Comrade Weinstein's ultra-left sectarian misunderstanding of Lenin and the permanent revolution." Here is some of what Clark said in June 1981: "The NC majority is seeking to defend the theory of the permanent revolution from a schematic, ultraleft, and sectarian rendering of it such as that presented by Comrade Weinstein. Comrade Weinstein is not the first Trotskyist to present such a schematic and incorrect view of permanent revolution, nor will he be the last. In fact, Trotsky spent not a little portion of the last sixteen years of his life setting straight such misinformation by comrades and foes alike."

Contrast this to the 1982 views of Jack Barnes. In his speech to the YSA convention in December 1982, published as an article in the New International of May 1983, Barnes says on page 13, "... Our movement must discard permanent revolution."

Barnes calls this change a "proposal": "In some ways the shift I am proposing is one of the biggest changes in our movement (etc.)." If indeed it was a proposal then why wasn't it submitted to the party membership for discussion and debate in the year and a half after the speech was made at the YSA convention? In fact, why wasn't it submitted to the party for discussion before the public speech was made? The party leadership, so concerned about following Leninist organizational norms, seems to be much

more flexible and charitable about these norms when it comes to itself. The reality is that Barnes's "proposal" became a fait accompli.

* * *

The practical result of the SWP leadership's new course has been the loss of almost half the membership. There has been a corresponding loss of the great respect the Trotskyists had gained on the left. There has certainly been a loss in party morale and a sense of frustration with the direction in which the party is moving. There has been an increasing estrangement from the Fourth International, the only International worthy of the name currently existing.

The balance sheet thus far is a very dismal one indeed. Where will it all end?

-- A party sympathizer
August 10, 1984

Editor:

George Lavan Weissman must have drawn some blood in his review of The Founding of the Socialist Workers Party (Bulletin No. 7, May 1984) when he pointed out that the SWP had never even reviewed the book, first published in 1982.

Anyhow, the SWP leadership arranged five classes based on this book at the August 1984 national convention and activists conference at Oberlin. As a guest I was able to attend only one of these classes, which seemed to me to be explaining away some of the SWP's early norms as much as defending other norms which the leadership still approves of today.

Even so, anything that gets members to read this book and learn about the real history of the party can only be a step forward.

-- Convention Guest
Aug. 15, 1984

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