

Information, Education, Discussion **Bulletin**
In Defense of Marxism

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

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No. 15

January / February 1985

\$3.00

Send correspondence and subscriptions to: Bulletin I.D.O.M., P. O. Box 1317, New York, N.Y. 10009

"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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NOTICE TO OUR READERS

During our first year we published 14 issues of the Bulletin in Defense of Marxism, but at irregular intervals. Starting with this issue, No. 15, we will appear as a monthly journal. In order to regularize the schedule of printing and mailing, this issue, mailed in the middle of January, is dated January/February 1985.

TASKS OF THE WORLD CONGRESS

by Steve Bloom

The coming world congress of the Fourth International, which will convene early in 1985, has an historic responsibility. No less than the future of our world party is at stake in the outcome of the proceedings. Since the last world congress in 1979, a faction has emerged in the FI guided by the Barnes leadership of the U.S.SWP. It poses the biggest challenge to our program and traditions since the 1939-40 fight with the petty-bourgeois opposition of Burnham and Shachtman.

The Barnes faction rejects the theory of permanent revolution. It has abandoned the call for political revolution in the deformed and degenerated workers' states. It opposes the Leninist concept of proletarian democracy within the working class movement, both before and after a successful socialist revolution. In practice in the United States it has discarded the transitional program and method as the basic strategy for reaching the masses, and no longer pursues a principled united-front defense of the interests of the working class and its allies.

These are among the most fundamental political questions which have differentiated the Fourth International, since its founding in 1938, from all other currents in the working class movement. If the SWP leadership succeeds in convincing a majority of the FI that it should accept such changes, a serious blow would be dealt to our world movement. It would jeopardize all of the work done by the FI over the past 46 years toward resolving the international crisis of revolutionary leadership.

Fortunately, such a victory for the SWP leadership's positions is unlikely. A solid majority of the International stands firmly behind the defense of our programmatic heritage, understanding at the same time the need to enrich that heritage in light of today's events and to apply it in a creative and non-sectarian fashion.

THREE FUNDAMENTAL TASKS

To combat the challenge of the Barnes faction effectively, there are

three basic tasks which the world congress needs to accomplish. The Fourth Internationalist Tendency's delegation to the congress will work to advance these goals:

1) The world congress must adopt a clear and consistent political analysis in counterposition to the perspectives presented by the liquidationist and revisionist forces. This correct analysis has been provided by the resolutions and reports on a variety of issues approved by the majority of the United Secretariat, which will be on the agenda of the congress for a vote. The Fourth Internationalist Tendency has criticisms and amendments to some of these resolutions, but we endorse the general line of the majority's perspective, which on the whole has been correct.

2) The congress must continue the process, which has as yet only begun, of involving and educating the rank and file of every section and sympathizing group through the discussion about the political issues in dispute. The education of the ranks is one of the most important aspects of any principled political debate, and organizing that debate so as to advance this process is one of the responsibilities of leadership--both the leadership of the International as a whole and that of its affiliated national organizations.

While the congress will settle where the majority stands on the programmatic disputes, the questions that have been posed by the Barnes faction reflect real pressures and problems of the world revolution today. In that sense they will remain posed, objectively, and many questions will remain to be answered even after the congress. Finding those answers should, as much as possible, involve every member of every section and sympathizing organization.

3) The congress must emphatically reject the bureaucratic purge of members of the U.S. SWP--whose only crime was to seek to have a discussion of these issues inside their party. The delegates must uphold our appeals, and demand that

the SWP reinstate the expellees with full respect for democratic functioning inside the organization. Everyone in the FI must let the SWP leadership know that they expect the majority opinion of the congress on this question to be carried out. The reversal of the purge in the SWP is a crucial step which will permit the reuniting of all Fourth Internationalists in the United States in the same party. If, however, the SWP refuses to abide by such a decision, then the congress must set up appropriate methods for assuring collaboration with the expelled members.

By taking these actions, the

Twelfth World Congress of the Fourth International will move toward its goal of building a world party--with a thorough and correct programmatic understanding of the international revolution. The present political dispute must be brought to a clear and definitive resolution with a reaffirmation of the relevance and applicability of our historic principles. This is the only course that can preserve the unity of the Fourth International and move us decisively forward to the achievement of its historic mission--the world socialist revolution.

PRACTICES THAT PREVENT GENUINE PARTY DEMOCRACY

After the lessons drawn by the plenum from the experiences of the various parties in dealing with internal party questions, there cannot be any doubt that in all the parties (and especially in America where the party is as yet comparatively small and weak) a real genuine party democracy must be established unconditionally and without delay. The practice of controlling parties by mechanical means, of setting up military factional regimes, of excluding qualified comrades from participation in party work and leadership -- all these practices have ended in complete bankruptcy everywhere and have brought a number of parties to the danger of disintegration and smash-up. The classic illustration of this was in the German party. But in the French party, and in a number of others, the same mechanical methods brought the same evil results. These practices have everywhere led towards isolation of the leadership from the party, and consequently to the isolation of the party from the masses. Control of the party apparatus alone is not leadership. Only those who are able to lead the parties politically and ideologically and morally have any legitimate claim to leadership in the future.

From James P. Cannon's "Our World Party at Work," an article about a plenum of the Executive Committee of the Communist International in the Daily Worker, May 26, 1926

FOR AN ACCURATE VIEW OF THE WORLD REVOLUTION

by Adam Shils

An exaggeration of the negative aspects of the international and American political situation is one of the main features of the report "The Leadership Crisis in the Fourth International" which Larry Seigle gave to the August 1984 Socialist Workers Party convention (Information Bulletin No. 6, October 1984). Seigle explains the obstacles that supporters of the SWP leadership's political positions face in the discussion in the FI: "Moreover, the objective weight of the course of world politics is working against us. The pressures of the retreats, setbacks, and defeats in the world class struggle that have been the dominant factor in the last several years affect the Fourth International.

... There have been no decisive new victories in the fight to extend the revolution since 1979, and one of the victories of that year -- Grenada's revolution -- has been wiped out in a defeat whose full impact we have yet to absorb. In Southeast Asia, in Southern Africa, and in the Middle East, the imperialists are stepping up their pressure and have succeeded in forcing a series of retreats on the anti-imperialist struggles."

"In the imperialist countries," Seigle continues, "the offensive of the capitalists against the living standards, rights and organizations of the working class has advanced, with no counter-offensive of any equivalent weight by the working class. Retreats and setbacks continue to outnumber victories and advances." (p. 7) This view of world politics considerably over-emphasizes the setbacks that world revolution has suffered and does not give adequate weight to steps forward such as the British miners' strike and the deepening mass mobilizations in Nicaragua. What is involved here?

SETBACKS

The first point that needs to be made is that there is an element of truth in what Seigle says. World politics have been dominated by two factors. First, we have seen what the FI has called "the international counter-

offensive of imperialism." This refers to the regaining of political confidence by U.S. imperialism following the indecision that characterized it following its defeat in Vietnam. U.S. imperialism was unable to decisively intervene against the defeat of its supporters in Angola in 1976, and was unable to stop the fall of the shah of Iran, or prevent the victory of the Nicaraguan and Grenadian revolutions in 1979. Today this situation has drastically changed. U.S. imperialism has regained its initiative and self-confidence against all of its opponents. The U.S. military has been reinforced. This process, presided over by the recently reelected Reagan administration, has led to an increase in inter-imperialist rivalry and poses a deadly threat to the colonial revolution. Second, we have seen a series of partial, but real, defeats inflicted upon the industrial working class in the capitalist countries. The austerity offensive, designed to boost the rate of profit by cutting the social wage and by increasing the rate of surplus value through pushing down working class income, has registered some victories. The current American situation is an example of this. Deep cuts in "entitlement" benefits have gone hand-in-hand with a large number of concessionary contracts being imposed on labor unions.

In addition to the imperialist counter-offensive and the austerity drive there have been other defeats for the world revolution. In September 1980, a military dictatorship came to power in Turkey. In December 1981, the Polish bureaucracy crushed the legal rights of Solidarnosc and imposed martial law against the Polish working class. In Iran, the mass movement that overthrew the shah was derailed by its Islamic leadership, sending that country into a clerical reaction. In the summer of 1982, the Palestine Liberation Organization was forced to withdraw from Beirut, initiating a period of dispersal and demoralization of the Arab revolution. In October 1983, the Grenadian revolution collapsed, opening the door for the subsequent U.S. invasion.

Clearly then, there is no place for

a facile "super-optimistic" view of the world revolution today.

ONLY ONE ASPECT

Any sober materialist analysis of the world political situation must take these factors into account. However, they are only one component of the situation, one aspect of the overall picture. We approach our study of any problem "with what Lenin considered one of the basic characteristics of the materialist dialectic, namely die Allseitigkeit (all-sidedness) -- the process of taking account of all aspects of a problem, and not isolating certain aspects from others." (Ernest Mandel, Revolutionary Marxism Today, NLB, London, 1979, p. 133.)

What are the other aspects of world politics that Larry Seigle leaves out? He leaves out of his analysis the continuing mobilizations of the European peace movement, the magnificent struggle waged by the British National Union of Mineworkers in defense of their jobs, the huge mobilization of the Italian working class in defense of the sliding scale of wages and the two self-convened meetings of the national assembly of factory councils, and the struggle for a 35-hour work week of the West German labor movement. Seigle does not discuss the continuing activity of Solidarnosc supporters in Poland today, the rise of the South African mass movement, the huge mobilizations against the Marcos government in the Philippines, the heroic struggle against the Pinochet dictatorship in Chile, the Salvadoran revolution, or the emergence of the Brazilian Workers Party. Seigle does not even point to the Nicaraguan example of mass action and organization.

Why does Seigle leave these facts out of his analysis? They are well known to anyone who reads the daily press and many of them are regularly reported in the Militant and Intercontinental Press. The first reason is the SWP leadership's increasingly sectarian retreat from reality. The European peace movement is opposed by them because it is not a movement organized around Central America and because it does not "defend the Soviet Union." The struggle of Solidarnosc does not receive much attention because it does not fit in with a view that "Central America is the center of world politics today" and because the Cuban leadership is totally opposed to Solidarnosc.

The American anti-intervention movement, similarly, is opposed because

"it isn't oriented to discussions in the working class" and is "soft on the Freeze." Here we see one of the main pitfalls of sectarianism: An unreasonable hostility to a political current becomes so magnified that one's whole view of the world is changed. The struggles and achievements of a movement, whatever its limitations and shortcomings, are totally obliterated as if the movement did not exist. If the European peace movement, the battle of Solidarnosc supporters against bureaucratic repression, and the American antiwar movement really did not exist then the world political situation would obviously be worse for revolutionary socialists. Fortunately, Larry Seigle notwithstanding, they do exist.

There is a second reason for the SWP leadership's pessimistic report. The decline of the strength of the SWP and its international allies can in this way be attributed to purely objective causes. There is, therefore, no need to analyze or discuss missed opportunities or a wrong political line disorientating an organization. The rapid numerical decline of the SWP and its lack of political allies in the FI can therefore be laid at the door of the overall political situation.

ANTIWAR MOVEMENT

This would make sense if the general political situation was really that unfavorable. However, the American and world situations provide a number of opportunities for revolutionary Marxist intervention. Let's look at just one example: the American antiwar movement. Seigle says that "the imperialists' war offensive against the revolutions in Central America and the Caribbean bears down on the working class as a whole, including its vanguard."

What on earth does this mean? There is certainly not a popular mood of jingoism or national chauvinism around Central America, such as there was at the time of the Iranian hostage crisis. Despite some bullying and petty harassment, there is no large-scale government repression of the antiwar movement. In most cities there is no public hostility towards antiwar demonstrations and activities. In fact, the opposite is often true. Rather than there being any great pressures creating obstacles to antiwar work, there are significant opportunities in this field.

We do not, then, have a political situation that is unfavorable for socialist antiwar activity. The success of

The Cuban Revolution, The Castroist Current, and the Fourth International

Why We Oppose the SWP's New Line on Castroism

Resolution of the International Executive Committee,
adopted May 1981

by Steve Bloom

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75¢ each

the recent Emergency National Conference in Cleveland and the potential for building massive demonstrations in April show what can be done to build a mass action united front for the immediate ending of U.S. intervention in Central America.

We have instead a rationalization, for abstentionism and membership loss, that exaggerates negative aspects of the political situation. It should be pointed out that this bleak and dismal outlook also serves the purpose of helping to foster a siege mentality of "circle the wagons" against all oppositionists both inside and outside of the SWP.

If Seigle underestimates the opportunities for building the FI, he also underestimates the necessity for building the FI. Seigle states that "we are for the organizational liquidation of the Fourth International in those countries where Marxist working-class vanguards have emerged." (p. 8) Seigle had earlier specified where this policy should apply: "the Cuban CP, in the FSLN, in the FMLN -- or in the New Jewel Movement prior to its destruction in October 1983."

Seigle's position hinders the victory of the great revolutions led by these movements. Why is this so?

WORKERS' DEMOCRACY

The program of the FI is based on the lessons of the past debates and struggles of the international workers movement. These lessons have a relevance for the Central American revolution today. For example, would the New Jewel Movement have been strengthened or weakened by the activity of a current consciously fighting for inner-party democracy and for involving the masses in the decision-making process? This is what a group of Fourth Internationalists in Grenada could have advocated -- in the context of working to support the NJM and the revolution.

Would the Salvadoran FMLN have been strengthened or weakened by the activity of a current that fought against the use of violence as a means of resolving differences in the revolutionary movement? The concept of workers' democracy, a key component of the Trotskyist program, has an important role in preventing the problems that destroyed the Grenadian revolution and that have taken their toll on the Salvadoran revolution.

This perspective does not imply an ounce of hostility or sectarianism toward the leadership of the Central American revolution. It simply asserts the relevance of the FI's program to the many problems of the revolutionary process. This orientation was spelled out by the International Executive Committee in 1981: "In Nicaragua revolutionary Marxists must be fully part of any project of the FSLN to construct a revolutionary party and, in this framework, they put forward proposals for developing and consolidating the revolution. In El Salvador they join the FMLN and in Guatemala they integrate themselves in the organizations leading the struggle against the pro-imperialist dictatorship. They carry out this orientation as loyal revolutionary militants. At the same time as they respect the organizational framework in which they operate they struggle for the program of the Fourth International and they group together its supporters." ("The Cuban Revolution, the Castroist Current, and the Fourth International," Documents from the Struggle, F.I.T., p. 10.)

We must have no illusions about the depth of the crisis of leadership or about the scale of the setbacks that the world revolution has suffered. But we must also see the advances of the international class struggle and the opportunities that the FI has been able to take advantage of. Reaching clarity on our approach to world politics is one of the key questions facing socialists today.

CENTRAL AMERICA AND THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

The True Record of Solidarity

by David Williams

In this issue we are publishing three articles in solidarity with the Nicaraguan revolution by revolutionary leaders in imperialist countries. Two of the authors, Alain Krivine and Ernest Mandel, are well-known leaders of the Fourth International and supporters of the political positions held by the majority of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International. The third is a statement adopted by the National Organizing Committee of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency in the United States.

At the Socialist Workers Party convention last August, Larry Seigle presented a report on the "Leadership Crisis in the Fourth International" to a closed session of that convention. That report has now been made available to the SWP members. In it Seigle takes "gross liberties with the truth," to borrow a phrase from antiwar leader Jerry Gordon. He asserts -- with no facts in support -- that "[the majority of the United Secretariat] recoiled from the advance of the proletarian leaderships in Central America and the Caribbean...." SWP members who are regular readers of these pages or of International Viewpoint, the English-language magazine published by the United Secretariat, will certainly notice a discrepancy between what Seigle reports and what they read here and in IV.

The active role played in the anti-intervention movement by the SWP members expelled in the January 1984 purge is a strange way to recoil from the advance of the Central American revolutions. The immediate response of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency to the Emergency Antiwar Conference held in Cleveland in September -- to build the conference, fight for a mass action perspective, and build the spring mobilization -- contrasts sharply with the attitude of the SWP leadership, which seems content to raise revolutionary-sounding slogans while letting others organize the solidarity movement. The work of the Fourth Internationalist youth organizations in Europe -- directly coordinated with the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) of Nicaragua -- gives the lie to Seigle's assertion about the majority leadership of the FI. In May of this year these youth organizations organized

a tour of Europe for two Sandinista leaders, Alvara Porta and Lautera Sandino, to bring the truth about the Nicaraguan revolution to the young people of seven European countries.

Fourth Internationalist leaders have shown no reluctance to exchange ideas with the leaders of the Nicaraguan revolution. Silvio Prado, a member of the FSLN's commission for international relations, attended a meeting of the political bureaus of the FI's European sections and presented a report on the situation in Central America and the Caribbean. After the session he gave an exclusive interview to International Viewpoint. The articles by Alain Krivine and Ernest Mandel which follow are based on their first-hand observations of the revolutionary process unfolding in Nicaragua. It is clear that these comrades know a revolution when they see one, and that they don't shrink from the work of defending it.

One particular note: Ernest Mandel toured Nicaragua during the recent election campaign. Mandel is not one who is afraid to raise comradely criticisms of other revolutionists in order to strengthen them against the class enemy. In his observations he commends the Sandinistas for their adherence to the norms of socialist democracy, for their respect of the rights of any political grouping which fights for its program on the plane of ideas and does not carry out acts of violence -- in reality, murder -- against the workers and peasants. While he questions the tactical wisdom of the form of assembly the Sandinistas have chosen he does not consider it a matter of principle or of overriding concern.

It is possible that Seigle considers this kind of exchange of ideas "recoiling from the advance of the proletarian leaderships." In fact, it is responsible internationalism -- internationalism which goes beyond sloganeering and seeks to build an international revolutionary party on the foundation of a correct program and revolutionary dedication of the kind exemplified by the Sandinistas. A mass revolutionary international which will include the Sandinistas and revolutionary forces like them can only be built if its com-

ponent sections have enough respect for each other to exchange their insights and if necessary debate their disagreements as comrades who share a common goal. It was not so long ago that the SWP practiced that kind of responsible internationalism. It's high time it returned to it.

NICARAGUA

People's Power under fire

A Fourth International delegation has just returned from a fortnight's stay in Nicaragua where they went on the occasion of the November 4 elections. The delegation was made up of Jakob Moneta, an ex-editor of the IG Metall's union journal and a member of the Gruppe Internationale Marxisten (GIM) of West Germany; Pedro Penalosa, a leader of the Partido Revolucionaria de los Trabajadores (PRT) of Mexico; Hugo Blanco, a member of the Peruvian PRT; and Alain Krivine of the French Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire.

On arrival in Nicaragua these comrades were given the status of 'invited observers' as well as being representatives of their particular party. This allowed them to link up with the 250 other invited observers from several dozen other countries. In the course of their stay the comrades had several meetings, mainly with leaders of the FSLN; with the Sandinista Youth (JS-19); with the Sandinista Workers Confederation (CST); the women's organisation, AMNLAE; the Sandinista Defence Committees (CDS) and with the Nicaraguan Peoples Solidarity Committee (CNSP).

Apart from these discussions our delegates were able to observe the conduct of the elections in the region of Ocotal, near the Honduran border. They also visited several agricultural cooperatives around Managua and stayed on a self-defence cooperative north of Esteli. The delegation was warmly welcomed everywhere it went.

The comrades of the Sandinista leadership made it clear on every occasion that they had decided, within the framework of political pluralism, which they intend to stick to, to enter into fraternal relations with all those organisations which support them at an international level, without prejudice. Our comrades reaffirmed the commitment of the Fourth International to the solidarity campaign and their willingness to build a united front of all those opposed to aggression against the Nicaraguan revolution.

As well as being interviewed on several occasions by the daily *Nuevo Diario*, which published their statements (see especially the November 8, 1984 edition), they were also able to meet the editors of the FSLN paper, *Barricada*, and the independent review, *Pensamiento Proprio*. At the end of November, comrade Ernest Mandel will also be going to Managua at the invitation of the Institute of Agrarian Reform. In the following article Alain Krivine gives his impressions.

Alain KRIVINE

To understand the situation in Nicaragua, the measures taken by the government, and the way the revolutionary organisations function, you have to start by recognizing a fact that today overshadows everything — the country is at war.

Nicaragua's frontiers are under constant threat from American troops. The slight

est pretext might be used to unleash an intervention or at least bombing. Within these frontiers, ten thousand heavily armed commandos, the *contras*, have managed to create a climate of insecurity throughout the country keeping three quarters of the population on continual alert.

Therefore, the FSLN leadership has been obliged to redirect all its policy to-

ward a single goal — making sure that the revolution is able to defend itself.

All the economic plans and projects for establishing people's power are put in question by this central preoccupation. "Safeguarding the revolution is more important than the coffee harvest," *comandante* Jaime Wheelock said recently to twenty thousand high school students ready to leave for the harvest.

Although intervention is possible at any moment, the imperialists are concentrating now on strangling the country economically, hoping in time to be able to base themselves on a current of demoralization and discontent generated by the tremendous difficulties of assuring an adequate supply of food and consumer goods.

For the moment, however, what is happening is rather the opposite of that. In the face of the imperialist threats, the Front has been able to rally behind it nearly all the youth, a large part of the peasantry, and the so-called patriotic section of the bourgeoisie. This result could be achieved only thanks to the authority and popularity, which remain intact.

The bond between the FSLN, its mass organizations, and the people is striking. The great mass of people feel that they are defending *their* revolution and *their* government. This is political support, which is by no means uncritical, for a collective leadership that is striving to prevent the development of any personality cults. Despite the election of a president, no particular name comes up when you ask who runs the country. All the *comandantes* are mentioned. And each of them is popular in his or her own right. On the other hand, the people don't make any bones about criticizing what doesn't work.

There are a lot of complaints about the growth of red tape, the proliferation of incompetent petty bureaucrats whose only talent is putting stamps on papers. "When there is a new problem to solve, they start by creating a ministry," a Sandinista youth leader remarked ironically to us.

While privileges connected to office do clearly exist, it should be noted that all the leaders have to do tours of duty on the war front, as attested by the recent death in battle of the minister of telecommunications.

The fundamental guarantees of democracy today are the existence of a real political pluralism, total freedom of expression, and the education and arming of the people, which are rather exceptional conditions in the midst of a war. There is a gulag in Russia but not in Nicaragua. "It's because you criticize us that you are Sandinistas," Daniel Ortega shouted at the election windup rally.

Nonetheless, it is clear that the present mobilization for defense is creating obstacles to consolidating people's power. For the moment, all the decisions are made by the FSLN, and no one disputes this. Conceived of as a "vanguard party for working people," the Front selects its recruits. You have to go through three stages before you become a full member. So, today the FSLN has hardly more than 12,000 members. But all of them are devoted to the revolution body and soul, ready to assume any task.

The Sandinista youth is the spearhead of the revolution. Half of the population is not yet twenty years old. All the military and economic mobilizations go through the Sandinista Youth, which has about 56,000 members and can mobilize 300,000 youth without any problem. Based essentially in the school youth, it is starting in some places to organize youth peasants.

At present, about 30 percent of the leadership of the Sandinista Youth are members of the FSLN. And it is not a mere transmission belt. Recently, the Sandinista Youth won the right to vote for sixteen-year-olds by collecting 90,000 signatures. Today, debates are going on over the role of grades in school. A lot of the youth volunteer to go off to fight and complain that they are at a disadvantage when they return relative to those who stayed as regards grades. The debates are generally settled amicably with the FSLN, which has just raised a new slogan in Managua, "Build socialism with the Front."

The basic mass organizations are the Sandinista Defense Committees, which can mobilize the population. They have about a half a million members organized in nine thousand committees. They are generally structured by elected collectives but not always. At the neighborhood, zonal and regional level, they organize all aspects of daily life (conducting censuses, distributing ration cards, taking care of the schools and health services, and so on.)

Finally, these committees organize popular defense with an impressive efficiency. They recruit for the militia, dig trenches and shelters, organize first-aid teams, and teams to clear the rubble in the event of bombing. They set up vigilance teams that patrol every night in the neighborhoods. How regular the participation in meetings is depends on the

political situation and the social character of the neighborhood involved.

The Sandinista Defense Committees are now projecting a national congress. They act on the political level more as a pressure group than an organ of power. Discussions are underway about what role "people's power" will have in the new constitution. But at the moment these committees enjoy a certain autonomy. They have not hesitated, for example, to criticize the opening of supermarkets that sell at free, and therefore exorbitant, prices the goods that generally circulate through the black market.

I should also mention the women's organization (AMNLAE) and its 67,000 members, who play a decisive role in defense through the militias and in economic tasks in which women often replace men who have gone off to the front. They have also waged battles for inclusion of women in the military service and for financial support for the many mothers abandoned by their husbands.

Last but not least, there are the trade unions. In this area, a lot remains to be done. The trade-union movement is very divided, with a series of unions being linked more or less to political parties. The

Sandinista confederation itself, the CST, has had difficulty bringing together all the Sandinista unions that are still autonomous. It has about 113,000 members, essentially in industry. But the Sandinista peasant union, the ATC, has about 65,000 members. In the public sector, there are 55,000 union members. The right to strike exists. There were about 15 strikes in September. But the leaders explain that it is often the right that pushes for them: "Some demands are just in the abstract, but the present stage of things makes it impossible to meet them, and you have to explain that strikes rebound against the revolution."

However, in a recent strike in a brewery, the CST supported the labor dispute. And in the private sector, some bosses are engaging in provocation.

Encircled, strangled, besieged and slandered as it is — the Nicaraguan revolution is a breath of fresh air for revolutionists throughout the world and a test of strength with imperialism. It depends on us in particular to make sure that this experience, which is unique today, goes forward. The stakes are considerable. Building solidarity is a political task of the greatest importance. ■

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Road to 'socialist democracy'

Combining workers power and national assembly

By Ernest Mandel

[The following article was published in the November 16 issue of *La Gauche*, French-language fortnightly newspaper of the Socialist Workers Party (POS), Belgian section of the Fourth International. The translation is by *Intercontinental Press*.]

* * *

The manner in which the election campaign was organized in Nicaragua, the way it unfolded, and the results that flowed from it contain important general theoretical lessons. These lessons are of such scope that they deserve to be highlighted.

For the first time since 1917-21 in Russia, a victorious and living socialist revolution organized free elections, that is, elections allowing the workers and peasants to choose between different political parties, different political platforms ranging from the bourgeois right to ultraleft grouplets.

This advance toward political pluralism — which is an indispensable prerequisite for any real socialist democracy worthy of that name to be able to function in real life — is all the more remarkable in that it took place in the midst of full-scale civil war, when the acts of imperialist aggression and the attacks and crimes of the Nicaraguan *contras* are escalating daily.

The Sandinista comrades were completely correct to reject any political rights for the murderers and organizers of armed aggression. They were completely right to grant the right to participate in the legal political life and freely express ideas to any organization that in real life respects revolutionary legality, whatever its ideology and goals might be.

Far from constituting some kind of concession to the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie or to bourgeois and petty-bourgeois international public opinion, this concept of political life

and of the role of elections under the workers and peasants power completely conforms to the interests of the revolution. It constitutes the best means of consolidating this power, enlarging its popular base, and ensuring an increase in the level of activity and class consciousness of the workers.

The Sandinista comrades are in the process of showing in practice that the conquest of political power by the workers, the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and the construction of socialism in no way mean a restriction of democratic freedoms for the masses. On the contrary, they permit a considerable enlargement of the right to assembly, association, free expression of ideas, freedom of the press, etc., for the greatest number.

It is not socialism that is responsible for the dictatorship in power in the workers states such as the USSR or China, but rather the counterrevolutionary bureaucracy that usurped the power of the workers and peasants, thereby allowing the international bourgeoisie to drape itself in the mantle of "democracy."

By acting in this way, the Sandinistas are coming back to the Marxist tradition on this subject. Need we recall that Marx and Engels considered the Paris Commune a model of the dictatorship of the proletariat? That Commune was elected by universal suffrage, with a plurality of parties and political currents, with public, free, and impassioned political debates.

To assert that the elections in Nicaragua were elections for a bourgeois parliament confuses the form of institutions with their content. A parliament is not bourgeois because of its form. It is bourgeois if it is elected in the context of the political power of the bourgeoisie.

It would obviously be absurd to assert that after the disarming of the bourgeoisie, after the elimination of the bourgeois state apparatus,

after the conquest of political power by the workers allied with the working peasants, the parliament elected under these specific conditions remains by definition bourgeois.

The Nicaraguan bourgeoisie had no illusions in this regard. In its great majority, the bourgeoisie boycotted the parliamentary elections because it knew through its own experience that the result of these free elections would even more deeply legitimize the revolutionary power in Nicaragua. This expectation proved to be completely correct. Would one imagine that the bourgeoisie boycotted the elections for "their own" parliament?

The essence of the problem is simple. The political struggle, the ideological struggle, the conflict between different conceptions cannot be resolved through administrative measures. The conservative ideas that are deeply rooted in important layers of the population cannot be eradicated through repression, censorship, imprisonment.

Such measures generally have the opposite effect on the level of ideas. The struggle against these ideas cannot be carried out properly except on the level of ideas, obviously with practical experience aiding ideological clarification. Far from fearing the influence of bourgeois ideas, a true people's revolution should encourage debate over these ideas before the broad masses, and with the participation of these masses. That is the best way to raise the political consciousness of the workers and the toiling population in general.

Obviously, to consolidate workers power, organs of power of the *workers and people's council type* are more effective than a parliament. But by itself this does not answer the question of whether, alongside such councils, a body of the national-assembly type remains useful or necessary. Nor, in particular, does it answer the question of how these councils and the assembly should be elected.

Comrade Tomás Borge, one of the main Sandinista leaders, gave a perfect explanation of the correct way to look at the question:

"We don't censor them, we debate and refute them. . . . [W]hen only the voice of one political force is heard it tends to fall prey to arrogance. The existence of these remnants of the past are [sic] explained by the very strength of the Sandinista People's Revolution. Our Revolution developed a style of ideological confrontation and political debate that prevents everyday life from becoming boring.

"The existence of critics, opponents, dissidents, nonconformists and reactionaries gives life and vigor to the revolution. Confrontation and debate are going to keep the people's political-ideological muscles in shape. It's a permanent gymnasium that doesn't allow for any atrophy and passivity" (interview published in *Granma Weekly Review*, October 7, 1984, p. 10).

Whatever the future vicissitudes of the Nicaraguan revolution might be, this political position and the practice that concretizes it will remain a lasting contribution to the world cause of socialism. □

Permanent Revolution in Nicaragua — \$3.00

By Paul Le Blanc

This study offers a detailed analysis of the dynamics of the revolutionary process in Nicaragua. Based on a variety of English-language sources and translations, it explores the socio-economic and historical background of the 1979 revolution and the political forces that were involved. It goes on to examine the advances, the problems, and the general trajectory of the Nicaraguan Revolution from July 1979 to September 1983.

Another purpose of this study is to test the value of the revolutionary theories of V.I. Lenin and L.D. Trotsky in light of the Nicaraguan experience. In particular, Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution is examined. At the same time, the distinctive contribution of the Sandinistas themselves to revolutionary theory is suggested.

WRITE: F.I.T., P.O. Box 1947, New York, N.Y. 10009

THE SANDINISTA FRONT AND THE NICARAGUAN REVOLUTION

(Statement adopted by the National Organizing Committee
of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency, December 1984)

In 1979, under the leadership of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN), the working people of Nicaragua organized the overthrow of the 45-year Somoza dictatorship. Today, a new society is being constructed, one in which the interests of the working class and the poor peasantry come first. The process we are seeing unfold in Nicaragua has not occurred spontaneously or by accident. The Sandinista Front has provided the Nicaraguan revolution with conscious and deliberate leadership at every step in the process since it came to power, recognizing and correcting mistakes along the way.

The national elections in November 1984 confirmed the FSLN's leadership of the Nicaraguan workers and poor peasants. A diverse group of fifteen scholars carried out an on-site investigation of the electoral process under the auspices of the Latin American Studies Association. The delegation's conclusions were presented in an article published by the Los Angeles Times (12-7-84) and written by Wayne A. Cornelius, president-elect of the association. The investigation showed that there was no evidence of irregularities in the voting or vote-counting procedures; the balloting was truly secret; seventy-five percent of registered voters participated and most said they did not feel coerced into going to the polls.

Political currents which posed alternatives to the FSLN within the working class and the revolutionary movement put forth their own candidates and proposals in the elections. The FSLN also confronted capitalist opponents to its right who aimed to slow down or turn back the revolutionary process. These elections provided an accurate barometer of current political thinking within the country. The FSLN won sixty-seven percent of the valid votes cast, and demonstrated its leadership of the working class and poor peasantry. And since the election, the mobilization and arming of the workers and peasants has continued. Five hundred thousand arms have been distributed by the Sandinista government to date.

Washington has reacted with extreme hostility to the deepening revolutionary process in this poor nation of under three million people. It has attempted

to derail or roll back this revolution at every point. Today the U.S. government arms and organizes the not very "covert" war of the contras against Nicaragua, and has imposed economic sanctions. At the same time, Washington prepares direct military intervention if other methods do not bring the reactionary results it seeks. In the face of these continuing counterrevolutionary efforts, and the attempt to downplay the significance of the Nicaraguan elections and the mass support given to the FSLN, all working people have a stake in defending the elementary right of Nicaragua to self-determination.

Supporters of the Nicaraguan revolution must counter the propaganda campaign of the U.S. government by pointing out the real facts of the achievements made by the Nicaraguan people and the leadership role of the FSLN. Significant social gains have been made during the past five and one half years. Illiteracy has been sharply reduced. Trade union organization has become a reality for the majority of the working class. Private businesses owned by the Somozas and their cronies have been nationalized, as has banking and foreign trade. Agrarian reform has begun on a wide scale. And important steps toward equality for women have been taken. These are but a few of the most significant achievements to date.

Social progress has been accompanied by a far-reaching institutionalization of new democratic political structures. Under the Nicaraguan system of political pluralism, all significant social and political forces in the country, who are not involved in supporting the contras, have had a legal voice in national life. The Council of State, a provisional legislature which operated up to the November 1984 elections, was an example of this. Within the council, as within the press, radio, and television, vigorous political debates over counterposed proposals took place. These debates reflected similar discussions occurring in the neighborhoods, workplaces, and popular mass organizations.

In the military struggle against the Somoza tyranny, culminating in the July 19, 1979 triumph, the repressive apparatus of the capitalist state was broken up. Since then, the remaining

political standing of the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie has been steadily eroded through a succession of social struggles and political debates.

Internationally, Nicaragua has sought solidarity and support in a very broad way. It has appealed to world bodies such as the United Nations and the World Court, as well as to individual countries, political parties, trade unions, religious groups, and women's organizations, along with the existing Central America solidarity and anti-intervention movement. As Silvio Prado, a representative of the FSLN's Department of International Relations explained in an interview which appeared in the October 15, 1984, issue of International Viewpoint: "The Sandinista revolution and the FSLN need actions of recognition and support by progressive forces world-wide. We want party-to-party support. We call on all progressive political parties to come out in support of the FSLN as the leadership of the Nicaraguan revolution." That call deserves support.

As part of the international cam-

paign of solidarity being carried out by the entire Fourth International, the F.I.T. has been active in the anti-intervention movement in the United States. Our members are involved in solidarity committees, have played an important role in the Emergency National Conference Against U.S. Military Intervention in Central America/the Caribbean, and are now engaged in the effort to organize the massive demonstrations projected for April 20, 1985, in five U.S. cities (Washington D.C., Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle, and Denver).

We urge all who seek to advance a revolutionary perspective to deepen their understanding of, support for, and solidarity with the Nicaraguan revolution and its leadership--the Sandinista National Liberation Front. All who solidarize themselves with the Nicaraguan people's struggle must become actively involved in the effort to defend the revolution--particularly in the national mobilizations against U.S. intervention in Central America and the Caribbean this spring.

THOSE WHO TRY TO SEPARATE LENIN AND TROTSKY

[Max Shachtman] wants to set Lenin against Trotsky, to make a division in the minds of the radical workers between Lenin and Trotsky, to set himself up as a "Leninist" with the sly intimation that Leninism is not the same thing as Trotskyism. There is a monstrous criminality in this procedure. The names of Lenin and Trotsky are inseparably united in the Russian Revolution, its achievements, its doctrines and traditions, and in the great struggle for Bolshevism waged by Trotsky since the death of Lenin. "Lenin-Trotsky" -- those two immortal names are one. Nobody yet has tried to separate them; that is, nobody but scoundrels and traitors. [December 1940]....

I have noticed a general tendency both of the ultraleftists (Oehlerites) and the pseudoleftists (Shachtmanites) to contrast Lenin to Trotsky and to refer to Lenin as the primary authority. This is nonsensical; Trotsky is Lenin, plus sixteen years of further experience and further development of Marxist thought. [February 1942]

James P. Cannon, The Socialist Workers Party in World War II, p. 128 and p. 217 (Pathfinder Press, 1975)

WHAT DOES 'NEW INTERNATIONAL' MEAN TODAY?

by Chester Hofla

One thing that the leaders of the SWP ought to be asked to explain to the coming world congress of the Fourth International is the name they have chosen for their "Magazine of Marxist Politics and Theory" -- New International.

The SWP has not been affiliated to the FI since 1940, when it withdrew because the U.S. government then passed repressive legislation against such affiliations. Nevertheless, the SWP has always remained in solidarity with the FI and has been its principal partisan in the U.S. So what does it mean for the SWP now to raise the banner of a new International?

The question comes up because the name "New International" has been used on two previous occasions in the U.S., and each time that name had a very clear and precise meaning.

It was first used in 1917 as the name of the newspaper published by the left wing in the Socialist Party and edited by Louis Fraina, later one of the founders of the American communist movement.

That was during World War I, when most of the sections of the Second International supported the capitalist governments in their own countries, and revolutionaries were working to establish a new International to succeed the Second.

The name of Fraina's paper therefore meant: "Down with the Second International -- For the Third International!" And that is what it continued to mean until 1919, when the Communist International was founded under the leadership of Lenin and the Bolsheviks.

The same name was revived in 1934 for a magazine published by the Communist League of America, section of the international Trotskyist movement. This New International, edited by Max Shachtman, began publication a year after the Trotskyists decided that the Communist International, degenerating under the domination of the Stalinist bureaucracy, could no longer be reformed along Leninist lines and that it was necessary to

build a new international Marxist organization.

The meaning of the title of the magazine started in 1934 was unequivocal. It meant: "Down with the Third International -- For the Fourth International!"

Exactly what do the SWP leaders have in mind when they adopt this name in the 1980s? What does this signify about their relation to the Fourth International, which the SWP has been linked to since they both were founded in 1938? Delegates to the world congress are entitled to that information.

If confronted with this question at the world congress, the SWP leaders undoubtedly will try to deny that "New International" has any content hostile or detrimental to the existing Fourth International.

"To the contrary," they will contend, "advocating a new International is in the interests of the Fourth International, which will inevitably disintegrate and disappear unless it becomes part of a mass Leninist International (which all of us have always predicted and advocated). When we talk of a new International, what we have in mind is one in which the forces of the present Fourth International will be merged with the forces of the Cuban CP, the FSLN, etc."

But isn't that just a slicker way of saying "Down with the Fourth International"? The intention of the SWP leaders is to do away with the Fourth International as a distinct continuator of Bolshevism, that is, to do away with its program. Since an actual new International does not exist today, the SWP leaders cannot propose any immediate organizational liquidation. But the political liquidation of the Fourth International implied in their "New International" formulation would be no less fatal. Their perspective for a new International would require us to sacrifice the struggle for the best program of the revolutionary Marxist movement. For that reason it must be rejected.

WAR AND REVOLUTION IN IRAN

by Robert Sorel and David Weiss

This article continues our assessment (begun in Bulletin IDOM No. 11, September 1984) of the SWP's support of Iran's present war with Iraq, and its sharp opposition to calls from "the U.S. left" for the overthrow of Khomeini's Islamic republic as presented by Cindy Jaquith in the May 14, 1984 Intercontinental Press article, "U.S. left and the Iraq-Iran war." Jaquith's article reveals the current drift toward a non-Marxist methodology by the SWP leadership in its flight from Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution.

Comrade Jaquith opts for postponing the perspective of the workers struggle for power in the Iranian revolution against imperialism until after "victory in the war" with Iraq: "The conditions would [then] be more favorable for advancing the struggle to replace the current bourgeois government with a workers and peasants government" (p. 289).

Comrade Jaquith rationalizes the SWP's defense of the bourgeois Khomeini regime with her contention that "the Iranian masses are not ready to replace the current regime with a workers and peasants government of their own," and therefore, "overthrow of Khomeini can only be in the interests of imperialism and have reactionary consequences for the entire region" (p. 289). Besides, she assures us, "the internationalism and anti-imperialism of the Iranian masses . . . finds its reflection in many of the stands the Iranian government adopts on foreign policy" (p. 288).

To be sure, Jaquith occasionally finds her "revolutionary" voice and excoriates the same Iranian regime, as in the following: "As a bourgeois government that refuses to break with the capitalists and landlords, the Iranian regime cannot chart a consistently anti-imperialist course, however. It inevitably comes into conflict with the masses as it tries to carry out measures demanded by owners of industry and the land. Ultimately, it must openly turn to the imperialists for support against the workers and peasants" (p. 289, our emphasis).

This entirely correct conclusion, and others along the same line, are

interspersed in Jaquith's polemic, but their effect is purely cosmetic. They are necessary to bring along those not yet ready to break decisively with the half-century revolutionary past of the SWP. The article's operative thrust is in an opposite direction.

There is not a single drop of internationalism in Khomeini's drive to establish in Iraq the rule of Islamic mullahs on behalf of "the owners of industry and the land." This is what revolutionists ought to be saying today. Jaquith would do well to consider whether the Iraqi masses, for their part, recognize in Khomeini's policies "a reflection" of their anti-imperialism; and as to the Iranian masses' struggle for the land, the factories, self-determination for national minorities, full equality for women and complete democratic rights, these have all been taken back by the Khomeini "republic."

THE IRANIAN CLASS STRUGGLE

Comrade Jaquith states that "the demands of the Iranian masses have increasingly come into conflict with the prerogatives of the ruling class. . . . The Iranian masses have been handicapped in [their] resistance by the absence of a working class leadership that could chart a course independent of the ruling Islamic Republican Party" (p. 287). This is true. But what are the reasons for it? And what conclusions should be drawn?

Let us first examine the "resistance" to the ruling class, or more precisely the revolutionary potential, of the Iranian working class. Later we will turn to the crucial question of the need for a working class leadership.

Assef Bayat, who made a study of fifteen modern plants in Iran in 1981 writes that "In the months leading up to the insurrection [of February 1979, that overthrew the shah], workers had shut down almost all industrial establishments," and that ". . . these two to three months on strike had a tremendous effect on their political involvement"; that "the workers had achieved a new consciousness, a strong sense of 'possession' of the factory, and hence a

tremendous fidelity of 'commitment' to and 'responsibility' for the factory as part of 'our people's wealth.'

"This sense of utmost solidarity was not specific only to the working class. Among industrial workers, however, its mode of expression, its objective and its organizational manifestations assumed an entirely distinct character . . . an actual experience of 'workers' control.' During this period workers 'managed' and 'ran' the factories. The degree and extent of their experience varied in different factories" ("Workers Control of Production," Merip Reports, March-April 1983, p. 19, our emphasis).

Bayat describes the situation in "the PM factory, a modern metal works in Teheran" in 1981 with "a workforce of 900" (p. 20), in which "the main impetus behind the creation of the Shura was ideological. The strong sense of 'hatred of the past' and of possession with regard to their own work which developed in the revolution did not remain on the level of pure ideas. The workers experienced areas of authority which in the past were indisputably the territory of capital." "Their efforts at this stage . . . can be characterized as 'socialist oriented'" (p. 21).

Bayat relates an episode: "The day I visited Zamyad (a state-run factory), the representative of Imam Khomeini and of the prosecutor-general turned up at the factory to settle [a] continuing dispute. After a bitter argument between the workers and the representatives, one Azerbaijani worker stood up and declared: 'Just as we brought down the shah's regime, we are able to bring down any other regime.' At this moment the workers started clapping!" (p. 22).

This high level of consciousness is accounted for not only by the extreme crisis of the shah's regime, but also by a rich history of class struggle, of militant strikes even under the shah, and in a history of revolutionary developments. The 1905 revolution in Russia (which shares an approximately 1,000 kilometer border with Iran) inspired sectors of the leadership of the Iranian Constitutional revolution of 1906. In 1953 the monarchy was overthrown, but soon restored by the CIA--aided by the betrayal by the Islamic clergy and by the class collaborationist program of the Stalinist Tudeh Party. This party, the backbone of which were the oil workers and tens of thousands of workers in factories, plants, and offices, could well have insured the victory of the revolution with a revolutionary class line.

In the 1979 revolution, according to Jaquith herself, "the workers and semiproletarian masses in the cities had overthrown the shah's regime--practically with their bare hands." "The struggle to bring the shah down had deeply affected the consciousness of the nation's workers and peasants. Having carried out the insurrection themselves, they knew they had made this revolution and they intended to use their power to drive it forward" (p. 285).

With all such conclusive testimony, including her own declarations, why does Jaquith contend that "conditions would be more favorable" for "advancing the struggle," for the workers "to use their power to drive it forward" after "victory in the war" with Iraq? Why does she want to postpone advancing the struggle now with the perspective of overthrowing Khomeini? "Marxists," she says, "oppose the overthrow of the current Iranian government by Washington, Hussein, pro-shah forces," etc. (p. 289). But who in "the U.S. left," against which Jaquith's polemic is directed, assigns the task of overthrowing Khomeini to the imperialists and monarchists instead of to the working class and oppressed masses? And who in "the U.S. left" is she lecturing against urging premature insurrectionary activity by the masses when they "are not ready" which would lead to their defeat?

A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

Let us now examine Jaquith's treatment of the imperative need for a revolutionary party in Iran: "The Iranian masses have been handicapped . . . by the absence of a working class leadership that could chart a course independent of the ruling Islamic Republican Party (IRP). A layer of proletarian fighters has not yet come forward that is capable of mobilizing the workers and peasants to fight for their own interests and to break politically with the IRP" (p. 287, our emphasis).

Well, then, what is to be done about "the absence of a working class leadership that could chart a course"? This is the crux of the matter! Shall we wait for "a layer of proletarian fighters [which] has not yet come forward," and in the meanwhile concentrate on winning the war with Iraq after which "the conditions [will] be more favorable for advancing the struggle," etc., etc.? All in due time, spontaneously, automatically?

Marxists, genuine Fourth Internationalists, must reverse Jaquith's process. We start by charting a course. It

is the revolutionary Marxist program, applied to Iranian reality, which will help to forge the necessary leadership. If need be we will proceed through let-
ters from afar (like Lenin's, not like Jaquith's).

The human elements for initiating such a process exist among the Trotskyist groups in Iran and among the many thousands of militants who have been disoriented and betrayed by petty-bourgeois, opportunist, ultraleftist, and Stalinist organizations. They can be rallied and united into a party of the Iranian proletarian revolution, the historic model of which is Lenin's Bolshevik party.

But such a party requires first of all a Marxist program, which would "chart a course," and a developing plan of action. This is how Lenin approached the problem in 1905 in his Two Tactics.

"You must in a revolutionary period ... take advantage of even the slightest legal opportunities ... to bring to the forefront the tasks of an insurrection and the formation of a revolutionary army and a revolutionary government, as being the only way to the people's complete victory over Tsarism, to the achievement of a democratic republic and genuine political freedom" (Collected Works, Vol 9, p. 122).

In Intercontinental Press of Feb. 15, 1982, Fred Murphy declared that "The Iranian revolution is very much alive," and now Jaquith reminds us in Intercontinental Press that "the workers and semiproletarian masses ... having carried out the insurrection themselves ... knew they had made this revolution and they intended to use their power to drive it forward."

This is assuredly a description of a revolutionary period. But instead of advancing a revolutionary program and charting a course which could build a party in the spirit of Lenin, Jaquith limits herself to the following: "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" (p. 289).

But with the ousting of Iraq's invading armies from Iranian soil, the imperialist-inspired Iraqi aggression has been defeated. The war now is being waged on Iraqi soil by the Khomeini government with the avowed war aims of overthrowing the Iraqi government, not by the Iraqi masses but by imposing a bourgeois Islamic Republic upon the Iraqi people by force of Iranian arms.

How will such a "victory in the war" create conditions "more favorable

for advancing the struggle to replace the current bourgeois government with a workers and peasants government in Iran"? And how does one arrive at the conclusion that before this victory is achieved "overthrow of Khomeini can only be in the interests of imperialism"?

Jaquith draws some fine distinctions regarding the Khomeini government: "It is a bourgeois government, but it is not a proimperialist monarchy." "The Khomeini regime is not worse than the shah." "The workers are in a stronger position to fight for their interests today--under the Islamic Republic--than they were under the shah's dynasty" (p. 289).

That was far more true for the Russian workers in 1917 under Kerensky, compared with their conditions under the tsar. But Lenin's Bolsheviks never credited Kerensky for this even when they were defending Petrograd under his "rule" from Kornilov.

The masses in Russia were in "a stronger position to fight for their interests" under Kerensky only because their revolutionary energy, degree of independent organization, and readiness to struggle for their class interests forced democratic concessions from their class enemies represented by Kerensky. The Bolsheviks in Russia credited Kerensky with nothing but treachery towards the people. They led the revolution to victory.

THE TUDEH PARTY

In Iran today, developing a revolutionary program especially requires exposing the treachery of the Tudeh Stalinists, and all of their compromising zigzags from left to right. The Tudeh, in sharp contrast to Lenin's Bolsheviks, servilely supported Khomeini and helped to carry out his disorientation and deception of the masses until he began to imprison and execute them, in return for their services. Yet Comrade Jaquith alludes only to the IRP's reactionary "repression against the Tudeh Party, supporters of the Fourth International, and other currents in the working class" (p. 289).

It is certainly the duty of revolutionists to oppose the counter-revolutionary repression. But Comrade Jaquith makes a special point regarding Tudeh: "The Iranian workers have not mobilized in support of the regime's persecution of Tudeh members. Outspoken workers in the factories know that when they criticize government policy, they too are labelled 'Tudeh' members" (p. 288).

It is not enough to say, as Jaquith does, that the Khomeini government is

"hostile to the interests of the workers and peasants"; that "by attacking the rights of workers, peasants, oppressed nationalities, and women, the Iranian regime has dealt significant blows to the gains of the revolution. But [you see] it has not crushed the revolution [!]" (p. 283). This type of criticism is but a left cover for attributing to the government various virtues such as: "the internationalism and anti-imperialism of the Iranian masses . . . finds its reflection in the many stands the Iranian government adopts on foreign policy." That is a deception! On the contrary. We must expose the demagogic posturing of the Khomeini government for its various diplomatic expediencies and to deceive the masses.

Academic commentators on history may limit themselves to the observation that "a layer of proletarian fighters has not yet come forward that is capable of mobilizing the workers and peasants. . . ." But it is the task of Marxists to bring forward such a party in struggle against the misleadership of the Tudeh, the Fedayeen, Mujahadeen, etc. This will not happen of itself! It is the essential meaning of Lenin's What Is To Be Done, his Two Tactics, and, on a higher level still, his rearming of the Bolshevik party through the struggle for his April Theses. It is also the essential meaning of Trotsky's continuation of Leninism in the Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International, the Transitional Program.

The living, active, critical revolutionary process of bringing Marxism in its concrete programmatic development to the working class is the essence of the Leninist method of forging the revolutionary party.

The method of the present SWP leadership fails to base itself on the concrete relations of classes in Iran today. Instead it dissolves the class struggle, which must be viewed from the standpoint of achieving the dictatorship of the proletariat in Iran, into the lofty sounding generality of "the international fight against imperialism and [of course] the struggle to advance the world socialist revolution" (p. 283).

Lenin saw it the other way around in his Two Tactics. He wrote: "Nothing will raise the revolutionary energy of the world proletariat so much, nothing will shorten the path leading to its complete victory to such an extent, as

this decisive victory that has now started in Russia" (Collected Works, Vol. 9, p. 57). The overthrow of Khomeini by the Iranian proletariat at the head of the masses would indeed shake the world of capitalism and its entire imperialist structure to its very foundations.

Comrade Jaquith, however, postpones this perspective for after "victory in the war [with Iraq which] would deepen the self-confidence of the masses and raise their expectations for completion of the tasks they overthrew the shah to accomplish" (p. 289). The interests of the masses, both in Iran and Iraq, does not lie in the victory of an Islamic theocracy of Teheran over Baghdad. The masses will not then "be in a stronger position" for "the completion of the tasks" of liberation from their exploiters and oppressors, and should not postpone their struggle to after such a victory.

THE CLASS LINE

The SWP's present concept of "internationalism" subordinates the class struggle within each nation to a struggle between nations which belong in either the "imperialist camp" or the "anti-imperialist camp." The SWP leadership has not yet generalized its strategic and tactical positions for Iran and other such areas of the class struggle in explicit formulations like those which were introduced by the Stalinists as part of the degeneration of the Communist International: the "bloc of four classes," "non-capitalist development," or "peoples front." But the underlying elements of those class collaborationist formulations and the SWP's positions are of a kind.

They stem from a negative assessment of the readiness and ability of the working class to take the road to leadership and power in the anti-imperialist revolution, and a positive assessment of the ability of representatives of the national and petty-bourgeoisie to act as reflectors or expressers of the interests of the masses in these revolutions. The Barnes leadership of the SWP has not yet fully identified with a totally class-collaborationist position but it is drawing dangerously close.

This is a serious matter, and should be a danger signal to the ranks of the SWP.

LETTER TO SWP CONVENTION DELEGATES



Fourth Internationalist Tendency
c/o S. Bloom, 2186 E. 22 St., Brooklyn, N.Y., 11229

January 7, 1984

Delegates
SWP National Convention

Dear Comrades,

The coming world congress of the Fourth International promises to be one of the most important since its founding. The deepgoing programmatic and theoretical questions which--we all agree--have been raised in this discussion place a question mark over the future vitality, and even the existence, of our world party. Because of this, your convention also takes on major significance.

It is unfortunate that you have not had the benefit, in the discussions leading up to your deliberations, of the varied views of other Fourth Internationalists in the United States. In a situation like the one we face now, the overwhelming priority must be placed on achieving the necessary clarification in the political discussion. This is an obvious truth for any Leninist.

Before your August convention, the Fourth Internationalist Tendency made repeated requests to the SWP PC and NC for the removal of the organizational barriers to the discussion created by our expulsion. We appealed for readmission to the party. Failing that, we suggested a joint discussion of the political issues. All of our proposals were rejected. But the main consequences of that rejection were not suffered by the F.I.T. It has been the SWP which has suffered most of all as a result of the shriveling of internal debate, because such debate is an absolute necessity for a revolutionary party. It is part of the preparation of all comrades to adequately judge political questions in a dispute.

For our part, we have never asked anything more than the normal rights traditionally enjoyed in the SWP--to have all views heard and considered by the party as a whole (i.e. by the entire membership) before any major alteration is made in the political program of the organization. That is all we ask now.

Despite the refusal of the SWP leadership to acknowledge the need for a discussion with the expelled members we remain part of the broader debate in the FI. We will be at the world congress, fighting for our point of view. We will ask that the delegates to the congress uphold our appeals, and reject the split in the SWP which was imposed by the Barnes leadership. All those who will abide by the discipline of the party should be reinstated. The leadership of the SWP must act responsibly to help maintain the unity of the FI. Even if all you want is a serious hearing for your own views within the ranks of the International, then you must take steps to reverse the disastrous organizational policy of expelling comrades simply because they try to defend a Trotskyist political point of view within the party.

We hope that your deliberations, as well as those at the world congress itself, will contribute to our essential task of programmatic and theoretical clarification.

Comradely,

Steve Bloom, Evelyn Sell, Bill Onasch
F.I.T. National Coordinators

FEW PARTICIPANTS IN SWP'S PRE-WORLD CONGRESS DISCUSSION

by Laura Cole

During the days of the anti-Vietnam war movement in this country, the pacifist-influenced wing of that movement developed a slogan which became quite popular on buttons, bumper stickers, and at demonstrations: "What if they gave a war and nobody came?"

Today, an observer of the SWP's pre-world congress discussion might well ask: "What if they gave a preconvention discussion and nobody came?" Since the opening of the discussion bulletin for the SWP's January pre-world congress convention, participation by the party ranks has been minimal.

During the 1981 preconvention discussion, before the beginning of the open revision of the party program by the leadership and the organizational repression of dissidents, there were 26 bulletins published, containing 239 articles and 921 pages. Before the latest SWP convention in August 1984, after the expulsion of all known opponents of the theoretical revisions, the discussion consisted of 11 bulletins, 58 articles, and 244 pages. (This last figure includes not only the SWP Discussion Bulletin, but also three Information Bulletins, which contained reports and documents relevant to the preconvention discussion, including the Draft Political Resolution--material that used to be published in the Discussion Bulletin in previous years.)

As of January 6, 1985, when the voting for delegates took place in the branches, the equivalent total for the present discussion is 5 bulletins, 13 articles, and 139 pages. But even this number of pages is somewhat deceptive. It is as high as it is only because of the numerous appendices to Larry Seigle's report "The Leadership Crisis in the Fourth International" (Information Bulletin No. 6 in 1984). If we subtract the 99 pages of this bulletin (which also contains the convention call and a copy of a short letter from the SWP PC to the branches about organizing the discussion), we get the shocking total of 4 bulletins, 9 articles, and 38 pages written by 8 rank-and-file members of the party. (An opposition platform was introduced in the last discussion bulletin by Keith from New York.)

This is by far the smallest preconvention discussion in the entire history of the SWP. Of course, such a quantitative measure leaves aside the quality of the articles that have been presented, which is also revealing.

What is the reason for this remarkable development? Are there no problems and issues facing the Fourth International which should be the subject of discussion and debate within the ranks of the SWP? Of course there are. The objective need for a discussion in the party has never been greater.

The fact is that such a necessary discussion has not been held because of the disastrous policy of the Barnes leadership over the last three years. During that time it has been introducing programmatic changes while simultaneously doing everything it could to prohibit any discussion of them by the party membership. Anyone who simply tried to raise an objection to this course was subjected to a slander campaign and ultimately expelled on trumped-up charges of violations of discipline. In the process, the idea of party discipline and loyalty have become equated, in the minds of many members, with agreement with the policies of the leadership.

Before the August convention the purge had already had a profound effect, but the discussion bulletin still had contributions by a number of members who did not agree with the programmatic changes and other wrong policies, and were willing to speak up. Then at the August convention itself, Eileen Gersh, who had formed the "Permanent Revolutionary Tendency," was expelled. This sent a clear signal to the party--that the purge was not over and any dissension would still bring with it the threat of organizational reprisals.

After the January 1984 purge the party leadership declared that it was now finished with what they called "the splitters." Comments were heard in several branches to the effect that since this phase had now come to an end, others in the party who had questions or disagreements, but who had refrained from raising them because they didn't want to appear to be part of the opposi-

tion which was now expelled, would be able to do so. A truly free and democratic atmosphere, it was asserted, could be restored in the SWP. But that is not the way things have turned out.

In addition to the purge of Eileen Gersh, the accusations and charges made by the party leadership against the majority of the FI have served to effectively repress internal dissent. Now party members cannot speak up for fear of "giving aid and comfort" to those who are allegedly conspiring against the SWP internationally.

* * *

Had the pacifists' dream ever come true -- of a war when nobody came -- it would certainly have been an embarrass-

ment, at the very least, for the ruling class. The present SWP discussion ought to be an embarrassment for any leadership claiming to be carrying out the "revolutionary continuity" of the party, as well as to rank-and-file members who are still struggling to understand that continuity. It should ring an alarm bell for serious militants who still understand the essential task of building a Leninist, i.e., a democratic-centralist party in this country. Only a sharp about-face in the policies of the SWP can keep this embarrassment from turning into the total degeneration of the party and the abandonment of its revolutionary heritage and tradition.

A comprehensive study of Trotsky's perspectives on the revolutionary party, its purpose, and its organizational norms.

LEON TROTSKY
and the
ORGANIZATIONAL PRINCIPLES
of the
REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

By Dianne Feeley, Paul Le Blanc, and Tom Twiss



Published by F.I.T., P.O. Box 1947, N.Y., N.Y. 10009

\$5.00 (includes 4th class postage)

LARRY STEWART MEMORIAL MEETING BOYCOTTED BY SWP

A memorial meeting for Larry Stewart was held on Dec. 16 in Maplewood, N.J., a suburb of Newark. Stewart had died of cancer at the age of 63, after 45 years of active struggle in the revolutionary, Black, and labor movements of this country. He belonged to the Socialist Workers Party from 1939 to 1984, when he was expelled because of political disagreements with the leadership. At the time of his death he was a member of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency, which he helped organize to seek reinstatement in the SWP (see Bulletin IDOM No. 14, December 1984, for other biographical data and his appeal to the world congress of the Fourth International).

The meeting was organized by a group of former SWP members in New Jersey, headed by Tom Bias and Joe Carroll, who wanted to have a non-sectarian commemoration of their friend and former comrade. To this end, they invited the SWP, the F.I.T., Socialist Action, and other groups to send speakers to the meeting.

The SWP did not acknowledge the invitation, did not send a speaker to the meeting, and persuaded its members who had learned about it not to attend. This was in spite of an article in the Dec. 14 Militant, which correctly observed: "Larry Stewart will be remembered as a revolutionary worker who devoted his life to the struggle for socialism and for his many contributions to building the SWP over four decades."

The first speaker was George L. Weissman, a former Militant editor, who had known and worked with Stewart since 1939 when they both lived in New England. He described Stewart's work as a volunteer CIO organizer in Connecticut when he was still a teenager, and his bitter experiences with Jim Crow in New Orleans during World War II after the merchant ship on which he worked had been torpedoed and sunk. He also recalled incidents from their collaboration at Mountain Spring Camp, an SWP institution in New Jersey, and in Monroe, N.C., where they had gone to defend Robert F. Williams and other victims of KKK terror.

Weissman gave several examples of Stewart's attractive personal and political traits, which he said had changed little from youth to old age, and called Stewart's "a successful life" in all meaningful respects.

The second speaker was Hal Layshon,

representing Socialist Action. He had known Stewart in the late 1970s for a brief period when both worked for the same company and belonged to Teamsters Local 560 and the SWP's Teamster fraction. Layshon paid tribute to Stewart's example of tenacity and loyalty to his principles and the cause of the working class.

The third speaker was George Breitenman, representing the F.I.T., who also had known Stewart since 1939, when he

LETTER FROM "THE LEGLESS VETERAN"

December 14, 1984

Thanks for sending me a notice about the meeting to pay tribute to Larry Stewart, but I am unable to attend because I am hospitalized and have been for almost a year.

Larry and I were friends and comrades for most of our lives, and I share the sense of loss that you feel. There aren't many people I have met who are as forthright and considerate as he was. He will be missed by everyone who knew him.

I will always feel personally indebted to him for the help he gave me in the 1940s and 1950s when I was fired from my job as a clerk with the Veterans Administration in Newark because of my socialist opinions. It took more than eight years of hard fighting before we won my case, and Larry was one of the foremost fighters who made victory possible.

Although he was very sick himself -- sicker than I knew -- he visited me in the hospital in October in order to cheer me up. By that time such a visit must have been tiring for him, but he did not let on and did what he could to make me feel better.

When the people of this world begin to act like human beings should -- cooperating for the common good and doing away with all forms of exploitation and oppression -- it will be because of the unselfish efforts of men and women who share the vision of Larry Stewart.

Fraternally,
James Kutcher

moved to Newark. Most of his remarks were given to anecdotes about the ways in which Stewart personified revolutionary continuity; about his passion for

"saying what is" (in Trotsky's term) or "telling it like it is" (in Malcolm X's term) and his indignation against "socialists" or "communists" who told lies to the workers; about the scrupulous care he took in his work as a member of the SWP's Control Commission in the 1970s; and about his feelings on interracial relations in the movement.

Breitman also criticized the SWP for boycotting the memorial meeting: "This is something new for the SWP. Less than three years ago they sent an official SWP speaker to the Murry Weiss memorial meeting, even though Weiss, unlike Stewart, was very antagonistic to the SWP and, again unlike Stewart, did not want to belong to it." He also objected to the Militant statement that Stewart "left the SWP as part of a split over organizational and political differences." Stewart did not "leave" the SWP, Breitman said -- he was kicked out,

expelled -- and it is a distortion to imply that he split.

The SWP convention in August rejected Stewart's appeal for reinstatement, and the SWP leadership said the Stewart case was "closed." But it isn't closed, Breitman pointed out, because Stewart appealed his case to the highest body of our movement, the world congress of the Fourth International, "and we are confident that its meeting in 1985 will vindicate his good name by ruling that he did not 'leave' or 'split' and should not have been expelled merely because he disagreed with some of the leadership's policies."

The final speaker was Tom Bias, who chaired the meeting. The text of his remarks follows. A letter was read from James Kutcher, the chief figure in the famous "case of the legless veteran" from 1948 to 1956, in which Stewart was one of his most active supporters.

IN TRIBUTE TO A GREAT SOCIALIST EDUCATOR

by Tom Bias

On behalf of Vera and Paul Stewart and Joe Carroll I would like to welcome you here today and thank you for coming.

As you know, a funeral service for Larry was held nearly a month ago. It may seem odd that we are holding this gathering today in addition. But our purpose is quite different. This is a political meeting. We are here to say "thank you" to Larry for the 45 years he gave to the workers' movement, to recall some of the things we learned from him, and, most importantly, to inspire those who remain to continue the work to which he gave over two-thirds of his life. Joe Hill's last words, "Don't waste time mourning. Organize," have become something of a cliché in radical circles over the years, but that's really the spirit in which this meeting is being held.

Most of the speakers here today knew Larry Stewart for many years. By comparison to them I did not. In 1975 I was asked by the national office of the Socialist Workers Party to be part of the team sent from New York to reestablish its Newark branch, which had been disbanded quite a few years earlier. Larry had remained in Newark as an at-large member of the party, and of course became a member of the branch as soon as it was chartered by the Political Committee. I first met Larry at that time.

He had not been idle during the years when there was no Newark branch, and he had quite a lot to report to the new branch when we got started. The branch was established to begin to take advantage of new opportunities opening up for the party in the working class and in the Black community, and Larry had been doing exactly that at the Nu-Car Carriers terminal in Port Newark, where he worked. He was working with a number of Black drivers, campaigning for Black rights and union democracy on the job. Their approach was to try to make the Brotherhood of Teamsters more responsive to its members' needs and more attentive to the special concerns of its Black members, while remaining completely loyal to the union. Let me tell anyone who isn't sure -- Larry Stewart was one of the strongest believers in trade unionism I ever met. He believed that the unions -- not just the Teamsters, but all the unions -- needed a lot of changing, but that without the unions working people had nothing to defend their rights and standard of living.

One of the first decisions the new branch made was to nominate Larry Stewart as the 1976 SWP candidate for the House of Representatives in the Tenth District. I served as his campaign treasurer. We saw his campaign as a way to bring the Nu-Car drivers closer to

the party and to help them make the connection between the work they were doing as Blacks and trade unionists with the whole political situation. Furthermore, we didn't think it was right that a city composed primarily of Black and Hispanic workers should be represented in Congress by a white lawyer, Peter Rodino. Rodino had gained a false reputation during the Watergate hearings as a campaigner for civil liberties and "clean government," and he was the most prominent New Jersey politician on the national scene. What an opportunity for the party, the chance to run a Black trade unionist against Peter Rodino.

However, we found out that Larry Stewart was a whole lot more than simply a "Black trade unionist." He not only knew what was wrong in capitalist society, not only had some good ideas about how to fix what was wrong in capitalist society, but he could explain what was wrong and what should be done to fix it, in language that people could understand. And let me tell you, when Larry Stewart spoke, his audience paid attention. His speeches weren't a lot of slogans strung together, nor were they classroom lectures on political science. They were explanations of scientific socialist theory illustrated by the experiences of the drivers of Teamsters Local 560.

One of our campaign events in the summer of 1976 was a Sunday afternoon backyard social at the home of Ford and Betty Sheppard. Some of you will remember that. It was scheduled so that the Nu-Car drivers could attend and meet the comrades of the SWP, talk about politics, and have a good time. In the course of the afternoon, Larry found himself in a conversation with some of the drivers on the sun porch, and he started making a few points. And a few more. And a few more. The next thing any of us knew the whole room became hushed, sort of like that E.F. Hutton commercial on TV -- "When E.F. Hutton talks, everybody listens." Larry had gotten into a stem-winding socialist speech -- no prepared text, no notes or anything -- but let me tell you a lot of prepared speeches don't compare to that one. I never heard Eugene V. Debs or other pioneer socialists speak but I was thinking it must have been like this. He wasn't taking examples from the newspapers or from TV or from books -- though there's nothing wrong with that. He was illustrating his points with examples from workers' lives.

We talk a lot about the working people, and their interests and concerns. Larry never forgot that's two

words. He never forgot that the "people" part is just as important, and that we're not talking about statistical or philosophical concepts. We're talking about people who have many different concerns. Larry's approach was to talk to people on that basis, and to be known not only as a socialist, with particular ideas, but as a person, too, and he wanted to work with others as people, and not just as workers, Blacks, or whatever. He spoke to the concerns that people have, not simply about how much money they earned or the conditions on the job, but also other things: What are your concerns for your children? What are your concerns for your children's future? What is it like to drive a dangerously substandard truck?

Larry was not a young man even then, and he knew that his energy level was not that of a 26-year-old. He was completely conscious of the need to educate and develop a new generation of revolutionary leaders, and I must admit that I did not appreciate this side of Larry until quite recently. I won't discuss the political disagreements which led me to resign from the SWP in 1979; I will only say that in the last half-year of Larry's life I got a lot of new insights from discussions I had with him, about how to do political work in the working class, the importance of the continuity of the revolutionary party, and the enduring foundation that Marxist theory represents as opposed to trends of the moment. And make no mistake. Though Larry had been expelled from the SWP he had not given up on it and was determined not to give up in his campaign for reinstatement. I asked him if he thought there was anything to gain by this and this was his response: he said, even if he and those who thought as he did could convince no one it was a matter of principle not to give up on the SWP. Even if a new party at some point had to be built, it could not be built except on a solid programmatic foundation, which could only come from a thorough discussion and debate on the political issues facing the SWP. He never at any time considered the SWP anything but the revolutionary workers' party of the United States. As an educator, Larry will be sorely missed indeed. He had a lot left to give us.

I want to thank everyone for coming here today, for remembering Larry Stewart. I hope that we can go out of here and continue the work for a better society that Larry Stewart fought so long and so hard to achieve.

SWP PUBLISHES 'THESES' AFTER 25 MONTHS

But Omits Introduction and Falsifies Authorship

At last, after two years and one month, the SWP leadership has published the two-page "Theses on the Workers' and Farmers' Government" submitted by the Fourth Internationalist Caucus in the SWP National Committee in November 1982. [See International Internal Discussion Bulletin, Vol. XX, No. 11, December 1984.]

This was not the result of a sudden outburst of liberalism on the part of the SWP leadership, which on four different occasions in 1982 and 1983 blocked publication of the Theses in both SWP and Fourth International bulletins, and which expelled the authors of the Theses and all its known or suspected supporters by the start of 1984. It was the result of the fact that the United Secretariat of the FI had published the Theses in the French edition of the IIDB and asked the SWP to include it in the English-language edition which the SWP publishes as a fraternal courtesy to the United Secretariat.

While thus compelled to publish a document which they did not want SWP members to see, the SWP leaders did not publish the Theses in the same way as the French IIDB had done. They omitted the introductory paragraph that preceded the French translation, and they changed the authorship of the Theses.

It is easy to see why they omitted the introduction (reprinted below). When they are accusing the United Secretariat Bureau of "factionalism" it is embarrassing for them to have it known for how long the Barnes faction had suppressed this document.

But it is not so easy to figure out why they deleted the name of the Theses' authors -- the F.I.C. -- and replaced it with the name of "George Breitman, Fourth Internationalist Tendency, United States."

This could not have been a mistake because the Theses had been submitted to the SWP four times in the last two years, always signed by the F.I.C. It was a deliberate substitution.

But why? What did the SWP leaders expect to gain from a distortion so clumsy and so obvious? Unable to agree on any rational explanation for such a caper, we asked George Breitman if he had any. He said:

"I didn't write a single word of the Theses. Since the SWP central leadership team knows this as well as I do, it was not a mistake they committed but a deliberate misattribution.

"If it had been an honest mistake, I would have felt flattered to be credited with authorship of the Theses. It and the supplementary article by Steve Bloom, which takes the general ideas of the Theses and applies them to today's concrete problems, are, in my opinion, among the best theoretical contributions made to the FI between its 1979 and 1985 congresses.

"But I can't help you figure out why the central leadership team forged my name to this document. This is more of the stuff making some people think that SWP stands for Surrealist Workers Party."

[Introductory note--The following "Theses on the Workers' and Farmers' Government" were submitted to the IIDB in November 1982 by the Fourth Internationalist Caucus in the SWP National Committee together with a much longer explanatory article, "The Workers' and Farmers' Government and the Socialist Revolution," by Steve Bloom. The leadership of the SWP repeatedly refused to act to recommend the publication of this material in the IIDB. Since that time, the members of the Fourth Internationalist Caucus have been expelled from the SWP, and we are among the comrades who have formed the Fourth Internationalist Tendency (F.I.T.) in the United States. Due to considerations of space, the IIDB is unable to print the Bloom article, but it has appeared in issue #6 of the F.I.T.'s publication, Bulletin In Defense of Marxism. Copies can be ordered for U.S. \$3.00 from Bulletin IDOM, P.O. Box 1317, New York, N.Y. 10009.]

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE UNIONS IN 1984

by Frank Lovell

It was not a good year. From the start the employers appeared to have the advantage and kept pushing for more wage cuts and fringe takebacks than the year before. In December 1983, after a six-week strike in which the rank and file fought hard and well, the Greyhound bus drivers accepted deep pay cuts and a two-tier wage structure, dictated by the company and agreed to by top officials of the Amalgamated Transit Union. One picket was killed, run down by a scab driver. Nearly a hundred others were fired, accused of "damaging company property." The brutality and draconic terms of the employers and the agencies of government involved in this strike were thought by many workers to be signs of things to come, foreshadowing the new year.

The Phelps-Dodge copper miners in Arizona, threatened with drastic wage cuts and continuous layoffs, were forced to strike in July 1983. Almost immediately the company tried to bring in scabs. At the start of 1984 these strikers were still out. By midyear they were being driven from their company-owned homes by state police -- facing riot sticks, gunfire, and tear gas.

They were told by officials of the United Steelworkers that mass picketing and demonstrations could not stop the scabs, and would imperil the successful outcome of the strike. The "union strategists" urged reliance on the good offices of Arizona governor Bruce Babbitt, a liberal Democrat reelected in 1982 with AFL-CIO endorsement. It was Babbitt's Department of Public Safety that clubbed pickets, shot them with wooden bullets, broke up union meetings, and tear gassed women and children demonstrators and bystanders.

As 1984 closed the copper strikers were still holding out, and their union representatives had devised "new strategy" -- a threat to withdraw USWA deposits from banks and insurance companies that continue to lend money to Phelps-Dodge. But by this time the company was closing its mines, cooling the smelter furnaces, and furloughing the scabs who had been hired at cheap wages to keep the whole unprofitable operation going.

The copper industry was not typical of U.S. industry in 1984. Employment and

industrial production rose during the year. The temporary economic recovery failed, however, to bring back jobs in heavy industry (steel, coal, and auto) that were lost in the 1979-82 depression. Auto, for example, profited dramatically, boosting investor dividends and executive salaries to new highs and producing a near-record output of motor cars and other vehicles. But the number of auto workers employed in 1984 remained at more than 100,000 below peak-employment years. This resulted from automation and new production processes, a transformation that has occurred over the past decade with devastating results for workers and their unions in an increasing number of organized industries.

UNION MEMBERSHIP DECLINES

The cumulative effects of automation in industry, combined with the steady rightward shift in ruling class politics, began to disturb the complacency of the union bureaucracy. Union membership continued to decline steadily if not drastically in absolute numbers (it remains around 19 million), but in relation to the population it has slipped to no more than 17 percent from a high of 25 percent 30 years ago. Union organizing drives in 1984 failed to meet expectations. The anti-union offensive of the employers continued to press decertification elections. There were few outright union victories, and it began to seem as if more strikes were lost than won. AFL-CIO president Lane Kirkland blamed the NLRB, and other top union officials hinted they might support repeal of the National Labor Relations Act. It began to dawn, however dimly, that the capitalist government is not a friend of labor and labor legislation was never intended to encourage the growth of unionism. Some even said that the new anti-labor policy of the most powerful employers, embraced by the Reagan administration, was skillfully designed to destroy the union movement. Given this economic and political climate the best survival strategy the union bureaucracy could devise was to concentrate on organizing public and clerical workers where there were signs of success, and try to defeat the Reagan administration in the general election.

The prospects for the union movement were not so bleak as the union bureaucracy thought or pretended to think. There was no lack of rank-and-file militancy in every major strike during the year, beginning with the Greyhound drivers and the copper miners and including the hotel and restaurant workers in Las Vegas, the UAW strikers at the AP Parts plant in Toledo, the hospital workers in New York, the clerical workers at Yale University, and the Chicago teachers near the end of the year.

The two major wage settlements in basic industry where strikes were expected to develop and did not were in auto and coal. In both industries the workers looked for a more favorable outcome, and were prepared to conduct a determined struggle if properly represented. The employers held the initiative from the beginning, and they convinced the UAW and the United Mine Workers negotiators that it would be mutually beneficial for the unions and the employers to settle on the existing terms, with neither side making concessions, in exchange for a period of "labor stability and union/management collaboration."

This turn of events seemed to contradict the popular perception, encouraged by the earlier statements of Kirkland and others in the AFL-CIO hierarchy, that the employers are out to destroy the union movement, seeking unconditional surrender in a war of extermination. The truth is that the employers are not opposed to unions that do not fight very hard for the needs of their members and that provide a more stable industrial workforce than would otherwise be available. The employers prefer no union or company unions, but a reasonable approximation will do for the present.

At year's end it must be recognized that the union movement was not destroyed despite the dire predictions about Reagan's reelection. Nineteen million organized workers remain a potentially powerful social and political force.

During the year the question of labor's future was raised in many circles, including academia, the government (both the constituted branches and departments and the advisory groups), the union officialdom, and the radical political parties and others in and around the union movement. This was prompted by the open anti-labor stance of the Reagan administration and by the hesitation and uncertainty of the union leadership. The wide range of interest in this question produced a large body of opinion --

books, articles, lectures, letters, etc. Most of those on the employer side hailed the demise of the unions, but the more sober view from this quarter saw the "social need" of unions.

Those around the union bureaucracy recognized the need for a "revitalized labor movement." Leo Perlis, a retainer to the union bureaucracy who served from 1955 to 1980 as AFL-CIO director of community services, thought the unions at their "weakest point in 50 years" and urged "organizing the unorganized, educating the organized, developing a participatory rather than an adversary approach to business, and greater involvement in community affairs." In other words, Perlis urged the union bureaucracy to do what he had failed to do for 25 years when he was hired to win political friends for the union movement among Blacks, women, small business people, dirt farmers, and other potential allies of labor. He forgot to mention how this should be done and to examine why he had failed.

The common theme in nearly all analyses of the present ills of labor, whether friendly or hostile, was the primacy of the so-called free enterprise system. Employers provide jobs. Workers need jobs to enjoy the good life. Therefore, labor and management must collaborate in the development and expansion of privately owned industry. But there were some dissenters, mostly among radicals who recognize that the troubles of the union movement as presently constituted are but a small part of the crisis of the capitalist system.

NEED FOR CONSCIOUS LEADERSHIP

Within the radical movement a debate began to crystalize in 1984 over the perennial question of how a new socially conscious radical leadership will develop in the mass movement of the working class, and how the present unions will be transformed from working class institutions within the capitalist structure into organizations of class struggle against the inequality and injustice of capitalism. One side of this debate was stated in a general way by Steve Early, a labor journalist and activist lawyer, who contended in "A New Generation of Labor Lefts" (The Nation, May 5) that not much will happen in the unions without conscious leadership. "It took conscious action and in many cases organizational commitment for New Leftists to enter the ranks of labor and play the role they have," he said. "It will take additional bold initiatives to expand their following and political influence in the years to come."

The other side of the argument was advanced rather accidentally by Norman Best, a former AFL-CIO union official and teacher of labor history at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, in a critical letter on workers and state power (Monthly Review, September). Best wrote: "Before U.S. trade unionists can regain the power of the 1930s, they must regain the ideological independence of the 1930s, when production-for-use concepts and laws to increase people's influence in the capitalist state were a part of everyday political dialogue." This succinctly expresses the belief that social pressures must produce a new mass radicalization before changes occur within the union movement, failing to recognize that struggles within the unions and other working class organizations are a necessary part of the mass radicalization.

These are not isolated examples. The debate, only beginning and not yet clearly defined, continues to grow in the radical press. The left social democrats (Democratic Socialists of America), the Stalinists (Communist Party), and some other radicals who are or seek to become active in the unions subscribe to the view that a conscious left wing leadership can find support and begin to develop under present conditions in the unions, leaving aside the question of how this will be accomplished.

The Socialist Workers Party, most radical sectarian groups, and others who criticize and oppose the evils of capitalism on moral or religious grounds take the opposite view that the unions will be drawn into the vortex of social struggle by outside forces. Then, and only then, they say, will a new leadership emerge.

WHERE TO BEGIN

A correct analysis must understand the connection between the objective forces that will move the masses, and the development of a vanguard which can help to organize and give direction to that motion. It is true that the present anti-union offensive of the employers is bound to collide with the self-interest of millions of workers, and that the workers will become convinced in this way as no amount of preaching can convince them that there is no way out but to fight. Under such conditions the prospect of big class battles is most likely, and the unions will undergo great change. But that does not negate the need for radicals who anticipate these battles to begin arming themselves and others in the union movement for the coming struggle, as many are trying to

do. In fact, the emerging debate over how the union movement will be brought into fighting shape, and related questions, is only one manifestation of the new interest and activity in the unions.

The response of the SWP under its present leadership is of special interest because the history, accumulated experience, and principled programmatic heritage of this party equip it to provide badly needed leadership at this juncture. What it does now will determine its future and may affect the future of the union movement in either a positive or negative way.

At the SWP national convention in August 1984 and again at the plenum of the party's national committee in December, national secretary Jack Barnes presented a scenario for the U.S. political situation as he sees it. He sees the industrial working class "at the center of politics in this country" where there is not yet a labor party or any other form of independent political organization of any broad segment of the class. He sees a leaderless fightback struggle of Blacks, financially ruined farmers, and militant-minded workers who are being prepared by their present experiences for future struggles. He foresees great class battles in the future. He calls for the recruitment of the young, the oppressed, and the most exploited to the revolutionary ideas and program of Lenin. But all reference to how the ideas and program apply to the existing situation is missing from his view.

For those who pretend to prepare for future class battles by studying the writings of Lenin it is a pity that they fail to heed his advice in one of his early works called "Where To Begin." He said, "Work for the establishment of a fighting organization must be carried on under all circumstances, no matter how 'drab and peaceful' the times may be, and no matter how low the 'depression of revolutionary spirit' has sunk. More than that it is precisely in such conditions and in such periods that this work is particularly required: for it would be too late to start building such an organization in the midst of uprisings and outbreaks. The organization must be ready when the moment arrives." (Collected Works, vol. 5)

Lenin was writing about the organization of a revolutionary working class party that would be prepared to take power. But an important part of that preparation under present day conditions in this country is careful attention to a transitional program of action for militants in the unions.

ZIMMERWALD (1915) AND CLEVELAND (1984)

Lessons of Two Antiwar Conferences

by George Breitman

The Socialist Workers Party's latest book, Lenin's Struggle for a Revolutionary International (Monad Press, 1984), requires a separate discussion of the reasons for its publication at this time as well as an examination of its positive and negative features, and it will get such a discussion in a future issue of this bulletin. But there is no need to wait until then to conclude that the people who most need to absorb the book's lessons about the Zimmerwald conference almost 70 years ago are the SWP leaders themselves.

Zimmerwald, Switzerland, was the site in September 1915 of a small conference. Its delegates came from revolutionary, radical, and pacifist groups who opposed World War I and the support of that war by the opportunist and reformist leaders of most of the parties of the Second International. Despite the important differences among the various tendencies that gathered at Zimmerwald, this conference -- one year after the slaughter started -- represented the beginning of international opposition to the imperialist war. It was a forerunner of the Third International founded in 1919.

Because of wartime restrictions, only 42 delegates from countries on both sides of the war lines were able to get to Zimmerwald, and they were divided over many questions. From Russia, for example, there were Lenin and Zinoviev for the Bolsheviks, Martov and Axelrod for the Mensheviks, Chernov and Natanson for the Socialist Revolutionaries, Trotsky for the Nashe Slovo exile group in France, etc. A left wing formed around the positions of the Bolsheviks, but it could consistently count on only about one-fifth of the votes at the conference.

The Zimmerwald conference was of course different in many ways from the emergency national conference against U.S. military intervention in Central America/the Caribbean held in Cleveland in September 1984. But they were both antiwar conferences called to achieve united action against imperialist war, at which revolutionary socialists were a minority. It is instructive therefore to compare what the Bolsheviks did at Zimmerwald in 1915 and what the SWP, which claims to be upholding and continuing

Bolshevik policies and traditions, did in Cleveland in 1984.

The Bolsheviks, according to the editors of Lenin's Struggle, did everything they could to build the Zimmerwald conference. Most sections of the Second International had capitulated to the war drive, but the Bolsheviks did not view this fact as a reason to sit back and wait for better conditions before seeking to mobilize the antiwar forces. They attended the preliminary meeting to organize the conference, and tried to broaden it to include left-wing groups not originally invited. They submitted their own agenda and proposals for the conference, but did not withdraw when most of these were rejected. They persuaded groups from other countries to attend the conference, and showed how important it was to them by publishing a special pamphlet for the delegates.

The SWP leadership did not build the Cleveland conference in any way. At their own convention in August, they disparaged it to the SWP members as a charade of sectarians. They advised sympathizers who sought their guidance to have nothing to do with it. They refused to endorse it when they were invited to do so. Very few SWP members went to the conference. They brought no other forces there.

At Zimmerwald, the left wing caucus led by Lenin introduced its own proposals on what should be done and debated vigorously with those who disagreed. They presented their own resolution in writing, and their own text of a manifesto they wished the conference to adopt. But Lenin, who served on the conference's centrist-dominated editing commission, joined other left-wing delegates in withdrawing a crucial amendment against war credits "because its acceptance would to some extent jeopardize the success of the conference" (Lenin's Struggle, p. 314). And while the Bolsheviks were dissatisfied with some aspects of the compromise manifesto favored by the majority of the conference, they voted for the compromise, after expressing their disagreements, "because we see it as a call to struggle and because we want to march forward in this struggle arm in arm with other sections of the [Second] International" (p. 315).

At Cleveland, the SWP delegation

had nothing to say during the first two days of the three-day conference. They sold literature and took copious notes on what others said but said nothing themselves. They abstained on all questions, including the central one of setting a date for a mass action against U.S. intervention next spring. On the last day, when the conference took up organizational measures to carry out actions already agreed on, the SWP delegation finally took the floor -- to complain that more attention should have been paid to Grenada, to advocate support of a pro-Grenada demonstration to be held in Brooklyn Oct. 27 (which the conference had approved the previous day), and to denounce a bilateral nuclear freeze (which nobody had advocated at the conference). It was clear to everybody present that the SWP was trying to dredge up excuses for disassociating itself from the conference.

After Zimmerwald, the Bolsheviks gave the widest possible publicity to the conference and its manifesto. At the same time they published their own documents from Zimmerwald to express their criticisms of the conference majority. Lenin called his post-conference article "The First Step" ("toward a break with opportunism and social-chauvinism" in the crisis-ridden international socialist movement) and defended signing the compromise manifesto "with all its inconsistency and timidity" (pp. 331 and 334). In Russia the Bolsheviks were identified among the masses as the most vigorous and effective partisans of the progressive spirit of Zimmerwald.

After the Cleveland conference, the SWP disparaged it. The Militant printed a report grossly understating its size and significance and the amount of trade unionist participation it had, and exaggerating the role played by "small sects."

The probable answer to the comparisons made above will be that the Zimmerwald and Cleveland conferences were utterly different kinds of things and therefore they are not comparable. "It's like comparing oranges and apples -- right?" But SWP members should not let themselves be diverted by generalizations that are abusive and are concocted in order to prevent them from learning lessons from history.

One of the strengths of Leninism is that it taught revolutionaries how to hold fast to their principles and advance them at the same time that they avoided being isolated from the masses through the flexibility of their tactics. It armed them against ultraleftism and sectarianism and showed them how to relate correctly to forces that were not

always consistently revolutionary but were taking steps to the left. The Bolshevik line and activity at Zimmerwald were like a study book in this respect. They had few illusions about most of the other participants, but this was not the main consideration for them. They saw an opportunity to promote the interests of the movement as a whole, and they seized it skillfully. That strengthened the Bolsheviks as a special tendency along with the revolutionary movement as a whole.

As the current SWP leaders demonstrated in the fight against the government during the Vietnam war, they used to understand all these ideas and practices, which they inherited from the founders of the SWP and the Fourth International (who had previously inherited them from the Bolsheviks and the early Comintern). But when they decided to break with basic elements of the SWP/FI program and to cover their revisions by committing them in the name of an alleged return to Leninist continuity, they threw out many precious lessons and acquisitions along with the theory of permanent revolution, the method of the transitional program, advocacy of political revolution in the degenerated or deformed workers' states, etc.

That explains the pathetic spectacle of the SWP delegation at Cleveland. In the mistaken belief that they are acting like Leninists they make a caricature of Leninism and discredit it among the people who are most ready to fight with them arm in arm against U.S. intervention in Central America and the Caribbean. Political schematism and blindness are, unfortunately, as prevalent in 1984 as they were in 1915 -- even among those who want to be Leninists but trip over their own feet because they insist on counterposing Leninism and Trotskyism.

RELATED READING

"Emergency Conference Calls for Anti-Intervention Actions in Spring" by David Williams (Bulletin IDOM No. 12, Oct. 1984)

"Antiwar conference held in Cleveland" by Omari Musa (Militant, Oct. 12, 1984)

"Why Guardian and Militant Distorted Cleveland Antiwar Conference" by Dave Riehle (BIDOM No. 13, Nov. 1984)

"The State of the Anti-Intervention Movement" by Jean Tussey (BIDOM No. 13, Nov. 1984)

"A Letter to the Militant It Didn't Print" by Jerry Gordon and Jim Lafferty (BIDOM No. 14, Dec. 1984)

"An Open Letter to Fred Halstead" by David Williams (BIDOM No. 14, Dec. 1984)

NEW TROTSKYIST ALLIANCE FORMED IN ENGLISH CANADA

by Barry Weisleder

The Trotskyist movement in English Canada took a major step towards revitalization with the formation of the Alliance for Socialist Action (ASA) at a conference held in Winnipeg, Manitoba, on November 9-11, 1984.

The ASA was formed on the basis of the program of the Fourth International, the world Trotskyist movement.

Participants from eleven cities, spanning six provinces and the North West Territories, converged on the western capital. Unaffiliated individual activists came together with representatives of the groups that sponsored the conference -- the Socialist Workers Collective of Toronto, Socialist Action Collective of Winnipeg, Socialist Challenge Organization of Edmonton, and the Socialist Action Collective of Vancouver. (Each collective retains its public identity within the framework of the Alliance.) Also in attendance were observers from the Quebec-based Gauche Socialiste, and United States fraternal organizations Socialist Action and the Fourth Internationalist Tendency.

The lively discussions and positive outlook that characterized the gathering are hopeful signs in an otherwise difficult political period.

Under the impact of the capitalist offensive, both domestic and international, the revolutionary left has undergone severe crisis and a marked decline. Significant Maoist organizations have virtually disappeared. And groups in Canada claiming adherence to the world Trotskyist movement have succumbed to a process of deep sectarianization, adopting bizarre political schemas and overly rigid norms that have repelled a majority of the active Trotskyists in English Canada and Quebec.

The founders of the ASA aspire to reverse this trend.

The conference brought together militants, young and old, women and men who are local leaders in today's movements for social change across English Canada. It was a gathering of active trade unionists, feminists, gay, student, youth, and antiwar militants, left wing New Democrats, and members of Central America and Eastern Europe solidarity committees.

Although united around the historic program of the Fourth International, including permanent revolution for the underdeveloped countries and political revolution for the bureaucratized workers' states, conference participants recognized the need for an unhurried and thorough discussion of the political

situation in Canada and the tasks facing socialists today.

A National Steering Committee, composed equally of women and men from each of the cities and regions represented, was established to organize the written and oral political discussion.

A public bulletin of the ASA will serve as the forum for the debate, as well as a vehicle for ASA campaigns, along with analysis of key issues and events in the class struggle. Contributions to the bulletin from friends of the Alliance are welcome.

Within six months the National Steering Committee will meet to evaluate the progress of the internal discussion and to consider the scheduling of a convention both to vote on resolutions and to found a united, democratic-centralist revolutionary socialist organization.

Central to the ASA's perspective is the construction of such an organization on a Pan-Canadian scale, in conjunction with the comrades of Gauche Socialiste.

Just as strong as the ASA's commitment to democratic debate is its commitment to action.

The Winnipeg conference adopted as a political priority for the Alliance the building of a mass action-oriented movement to oppose U.S. military intervention, and Canadian complicity, in Central America and the Caribbean. In collaboration with our American co-thinkers, Alliance members will be working, where possible, to build an international day of protest next April against Washington/Ottawa's policies in the region.

The conference began by celebrating an important victory for women's rights. Participants hailed the Toronto jury acquittal of Doctors Morgentaler, Smoling, and Scott on charges of "conspiracy to procure an abortion." The now strengthened fight for free-standing abortion clinics and repeal of the restrictive federal abortion law will be a major preoccupation of socialists and feminists in preparation for International Women's Day.

The gathering ended on a note of celebration too.

Following the third ballot selection of the name for the new organization -- the Alliance for Socialist Action -- the meeting burst into applause.

A very eventful weekend concluded as the members of the newly formed Alliance rose, with fists in the air, to sing the defiant words of the Internationale, anthem of class-conscious working people the world over.

HEALYITES ESCALATE SLANDER CAMPAIGN AGAINST SWP

For many years the Workers Revolutionary Party in Britain, led by Gerry Healy, and the Workers League (its fraternal organization in the U.S.) have centered their political energies on a slander campaign against the leadership of the U.S. Socialist Workers Party. The Healyites have declared that the central leaders of the SWP are "agents of the FBI and the KGB" (Soviet secret police). Despite hundreds and hundreds of pages devoted to this effort over the years, not one shred of evidence has been cited to back up this charge. The entire "case" has hinged on speculation, innuendo, specious logic, and outright lies. Even the federal judge who heard the lawsuit brought against the party on behalf of the Healyites by Alan Gelfand was forced to conclude that there was not one shred of evidence to support Gelfand's claim that the SWP leadership was made up of FBI agents.

The Healyite slander campaign reached a new high--or low--with the publication of an article entitled, "Grenada--One Year Since the U.S. Invasion," by Bill Vann, in the October 30, 1984, issue of the Bulletin newspaper, which reflects the views of the Workers League. In this article the Healyites accuse not only the leadership of the SWP, but also the party rank and file of having ties with the CIA:

"Nonetheless, in the years preceding the invasion, the SWP sent scores of its operatives into Grenada posing as 'socialist journalists' for its publication Intercontinental Press, or simply as radical tourists. There is every reason to believe that these elements functioned as imperialist spies and that no small portion of the intelligence used to prepare political provocations and the invasion itself was provided by them."

Contrary to Vann's assertion, however, there is no reason at all to believe any such thing, just as there is no reason to believe any of the other charges the Healyites have flung against the SWP leadership over the years. This paragraph provides a textbook example of Healyite slander methods. No proof or

evidence of any kind is offered for the charges. The only fact cited is that members of the SWP went to Grenada. This is sufficient basis for the Healyites to charge that they were spying for the imperialists.

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Edited by Evelyn Sell

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There is some danger that sincere but inexperienced individuals might become disoriented by such accusations. Because the Healyites pose as "socialists" and "revolutionaries," even as "Trotskyists," their slander campaign is even more vicious and sinister than the attacks on the workers' movement that we all expect from the bourgeoisie and its spokespersons. These irresponsible accusations have no place whatsoever in the radical movement. The entire workers' movement should understand this shabby, dishonest mud-slinging for what it is and repudiate the Healyite slanders, along with the method that produced them.

HOW TROTSKY AND CANNON SAW THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

In October 1938 the Socialist Workers Party in New York held a meeting to commemorate two occasions -- the tenth anniversary of the founding of the Left Opposition in the U.S. (October 1928) and the founding conference of the Fourth International (September 1938). Leon Trotsky, then living in Mexico, sent a recorded message to the meeting, parts of which are still relevant today as the Fourth International prepares for another congress.

FIDELITY TO OUR INTERNATIONAL PARTY

"The fidelity to the cause of the toilers requires from us the highest devotion to our international party. The party, of course, can also be mistaken. By common effort we will correct its mistakes. In its ranks can penetrate unworthy elements. By common effort we will eliminate them. New thousands who will enter its ranks tomorrow will probably be deprived of necessary education. By common effort we will elevate their revolutionary level. But we will never forget that our party is now the greatest lever of history. Separated from this lever, every one of us is nothing. With this lever in hand, we are all."

--from "The Founding of the Fourth International," in Writings of Leon Trotsky (1938-39), p. 86.

Another speaker at the same meeting in New York was James P. Cannon, a founder of both the SWP and the FI. After recalling major developments of the previous ten years, he told the audience how he saw the SWP and the FI.

BUILDING A WORTHY SECTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL

"We began with the unshakable conviction that the program decides everything. And here tonight, on our tenth anniversary, with some modest successes to our credit, with a world organization carrying us forward like the great wind in the sails of a ship, we repeat: the program decides everything!...

"The founding of the Fourth International raises our national struggle to higher ground, gives us greater strength and wider vision. It is the symbol of the great hope of the working class. It is the invincible banner of revolutionary workers in every country of the world.

"We aim to build -- and we invite you to join us in building -- a party in the United States which will be a worthy section of the Fourth International. That is, a party with a scientific program, an honest party that tells the truth to the workers, a democratic workers' party, and at the same time a disciplined party, a party united with the revolutionary workers in all lands in one army for one idea, one program, one goal. That goal is nothing less than the workers' conquest of the world. All the material conditions are already ripe for this victory of humanity. History has put Socialism on the order of the day and the workers' revolution is the means to realize it. The Fourth International is the herald and organizer of this liberating revolution."

--from "Cannon Reviews the Past and Points to the Future," Socialist Appeal, Nov. 5, 1938.

Poland, The Fourth International, and the Socialist Workers Party

by Steve Bloom

WRITE: F.I.T., P.O. Box 1947, New York, N.Y. 10009 — 75¢

HOWARD PACKER (1917-1984)

Howard Packer, a leader of the Chicago branch of the Socialist Workers Party for more than 40 years, died December 18 at his home in Chicago. He was 67 years old, and had been ill with cancer for several months.

Howard was memorialized January 11 in the Militant, a newspaper he loved, read, criticized, and sold for his entire political life, with as impersonal an obituary as could be imagined. A string of former Chicago branch organizers and associates of Howard are quoted to the effect that Howard was active, hard-working, and a party stalwart who never missed a plant-gate sale. "He never talked much about himself," according to Steve Clark, a member of the party's Political Committee, and of the editorial board of New International, "except if there was a political point to be made."

Evidently none of the "revolutionary grasshoppers" who passed through Chicago paused long enough to form a personal acquaintance with this man, whom they can describe only with formulas that serve their own vision of what loyal party members should be. I first met Howard in 1967 when I moved to Chicago from New York. In the four years I had working with Howard in the same branch, and in a correspondence that stretched over the subsequent 13 years, I came to know him both as a comrade and as a friend. In fact, Howard did love to talk about himself, about his family and his experiences, and he had a true gift for storytelling. He read widely and independently about politics, science, history, Jewish and other literature and culture, and he appeared to retain most of what he read. Yes, his stories always had a point, but not always a political one -- only someone who had a purely official relationship with Howard would even think such a thing.

"Howard was not an overbearing person," Clark added approvingly. "He never so much as suggested that his ideas should be given any more weight than anyone else's simply because of his years in the movement." Actually, Howard never had to suggest any such thing. In the early '70s, when Clark was just being recruited to the Socialist Workers Party in Chicago, no rational party member ever doubted that a comrade with decades of experience might have something to teach younger comrades. Howard's years of experience were rightly viewed as an asset, an invaluable party resource. It is only in more re-

cent years, when the party leaders, including Clark, have done everything possible to stifle the party's resistance to the revisionist course they are dragging it onto, that years of experience and accumulated knowledge have come under official suspicion so that veteran party members who challenge the leadership can be more easily slandered, framed up, and expelled.

Howard was an exceptionally warm individual, and his warmth was absolutely spontaneous and natural. These all-too-common types who love humanity but couldn't care less about people were completely foreign to him. He genuinely cared about other people. The Militant observes that "young comrades really respected him." That was because Howard himself treated everyone with respect, and thus with tact. He could be quite sharp in his criticism, but he was never contemptuous, patronizing, or brutal. He was an excellent teacher precisely because of these qualities. Above all he thought things out for himself, even when he had confidence in others, and could be a gentle but persistent critic when he was convinced there had been a wrong turn on the road.

Howard was not part of any organized opposition in the party, but during the discussion before the August 1984 convention he made an excellent contribution with his article "Did Lenin Discard the Slogan of 'The Democratic-Dictatorship of the Proletariat and the Peasantry'?" Howard's answer: "Lenin adjusted and modified his strategy to meet the needs of the developing revolution, and in so doing converged with the approach of Trotsky's Permanent Revolution theory." (SWP Discussion Bulletin, Vol. 38, No. 5, p. 6). He ended his article with a proposal for the convention: "This convention resolves that the articles of Doug Jenness in our public press in the last three years, in those sections which discuss the course of the Russian revolution, be withdrawn as incorrect, and rewritten or replaced by affirming our traditional view of Lenin's reorienting the strategy of the Bolsheviks in 1917 away from the 'Revolutionary Democratic Dictatorship of the Proletariat and the Peasantry.'"

In addition to his wife, Nanette, Howard leaves his daughter, Arlene, and his son, Eugene, and one grandson, Ira. Friends and comrades can send messages of condolence to the family in care of Nanette Packer, 6058 North Campbell, Chicago, Illinois 60659.

Naomi Allen

RON JAMESON (1943-1984)

A group of friends in Detroit have collected \$100 to send to the Bulletin in Defense of Marxism in honor of Ronald Jameson, a former member of the Socialist Workers Party and the Young Socialist Alliance, who died of a heart attack in August.

Ron was only 41 years old, and had been a socialist since he was 16, when he first made contact with the SWP at Debs Hall in Detroit and joined the YSA.

As a member of Students for a Democratic Society at the University of Michigan he helped to organize the SDS's first antiwar demonstration in Washington in 1965 and to build the local and national antiwar movements after the SDS degenerated. He later transferred to Wayne State University where he was active in every progressive struggle, including a fight to help sponsor Malcolm X's speaking at Wayne.

In the late 1960s, Ron went to the University of Yerevan in the Armenian SSR, where he learned Armenian and from which he made many trips throughout the Soviet Union. His confidence in genuine Marxism was strengthened by this experience.

For personal reasons he left the SWP, then returned to full activity in the mid-70s, but dropped out again, this time because he was troubled by internal developments and what he regarded as restrictions on the democratic procedures that the SWP had had when he joined. He followed the latest developments in the SWP as closely as possible, and retained his socialist beliefs to the end. Just the night before his death he vigorously debated the 1984 elections, pointing to the futility of supporting the Mondale campaign.

Ron was an instructor in sociology and anthropology at Schoolcraft Community College for the last thirteen years, admired for his dedication and compassion by most of its students and faculty. "He put his heart and soul into his teaching," a professor said. He also put his heart and soul into trying to make this a world free of war and oppression.

Victor Papakhian

'SOCIALISM AND DEMOCRACY'

After I read Naomi Allen's article in issue No. 14 of your publication I went back and looked at the SWP-sponsored resolution from the '79 world congress, "Socialism and Democracy." I wonder what they are going to do in '85 if they don't come up with a new resolution.

I think what Allen pointed out is true, that the revisions were beginning to emerge and be formulated even in '79, but the SWP leaders have now traveled so far from their past positions that it will be impossible for them to support their own resolution as it was submitted to the last world congress. There are things in it that they just don't believe anymore.

For example, in the introduction we see a reference to "all three sectors of the world revolution" (Special IP supplement, p. 226), a concept they now denounce as in contradiction with the "centrality" of the Central American revolution. On the next page we find, "... the necessity for the development of the consciousness and mass organization of the workers in order to consolidate a workers government," a view which the Barnes leadership at present characterizes as "ultraleft"---a sectarian holdover from its Trotskyist past. (It counterposes to this its new version of a "workers' and farmers' government.")

There is also reference in the resolution to the necessity for the legal functioning of diverse tendencies within the working class movement in the context of the socialist revolution. This is a view the SWP leadership no longer holds, since it is in contradiction to the current set-up in Cuba.

So they cannot support their old text, have not presented a new one, and of course remain opposed to the resolution presented by the majority. It will be interesting to see what they do about this when they get to the congress.

--An ex-member of the
SWP, Brooklyn branch

ABRASIVE TERMINOLOGY?

One impression I receive from reading your Bulletin is that even though the F.I.T. tendency and aspiration is to reenter the SWP, the terminology being used in the Bulletin is not making it easy for the Barnes leadership to oblige.

One example: On page 25 of Bulletin No. 14 this sentence appears: "Implement in the SWP the policy you hypocritically demand for the International." While it is correct that they are being hypocritical, I assume it is your objective to win the support of the rank and file who are now supporting the Barnes leadership, as the last convention showed.

This type of terminology, even though accurate, makes it difficult, if not impossible, for any meaningful rapprochement. Of course the Barnes leadership is lying, distorting, and slander-

ing. But if your objective of reentering the SWP is serious, you must not antagonize the membership who hold the leadership on their shoulders. Good political debate, of which the F.I.T. has plenty, with patience and a non-abrasive terminology, will undermine the leadership support more effectively.

A Detroit friend

LOW BLOWS?

I am disappointed by George Breitman's unfair remarks about the SWP leadership as "unproletarian" (Bulletin No. 11, Sept. 1984, in the middle of his review of Doug Jenness' article about Carl Skoglund).

According to Breitman, the leadership is "the least proletarian component" of the SWP today; these leaders "have never been near an industrial job," and this may explain why they "utilize so many of the methods typical of petty-bourgeois radicals."

Aren't these low blows? Shouldn't the SWP leadership be given credit for trying to proletarianize the SWP? Isn't this more decisive than their individual class origins, whatever they may be?

"For Fair Play"

Reply by George Breitman: In the article mentioned, I did not seek to disqualify the SWP central leadership team because of their class origins, nor have I ever held that they don't deserve leadership posts for such reasons. I did say they are the least proletarian component of the party, but this is undeniable. Some of them have never been in industry, and others remained in industry only for a matter of months. As a result, they lack experience and knowledge that other members have accumulated. This, I suggested, may explain some of their errors.

I do give them credit for trying to proletarianize the SWP. But if they are to get credit for the effort, they must also bear responsibility for the poor and meager results after seven years. My

point is that there are proletarian ways to try to proletarianize the party, and other ways (mainly petty-bourgeois). The central leadership team seems to be ignorant of the former and to have an affinity for the latter. If the reason I suggest is wrong, then what is the reason?

GLARING OMISSION

The Dec. 28 issue of The Militant carries a report by Margaret Jayko on the SWP NC plenum which took place early in December. There were apparently two major reports, one by Mary-Alice Waters dealing with the international situation, and the other by Jack Barnes on U.S. politics. I won't comment on the substance of these incredibly one-sided reports except to say that it is hard for me to believe that the SWP leadership is actually getting more pessimistic about opportunities for revolutionaries today. (I thought they had already hit rock-bottom.)

What I want to call to the attention of readers of the Bulletin in Defense of Marxism is something that I found particularly striking about the Waters report, which discusses events in the world since 1979. She goes into things which took place in Central America and the Caribbean, Kampuchea, South Vietnam, Iran, Afghanistan, Southern Africa, Bolivia, Brazil, Peru, the Middle East, and probably some others I haven't mentioned.

But a country she says not one word about is Poland, where the rise of Solidarnosc and the subsequent coup by Jaruzelski is certainly one of the most important features of the world revolution in this decade. Such a glaring omission--in an allegedly comprehensive survey of revolutionary developments since 1979--is absolute and irrefutable proof that the political revolution in the deformed and degenerated workers' states has no place at all in the present schemas of the Barnes leadership (whatever lip-service might occasionally be given through force of habit).

--A Militant reader

ON THE HEALTH OF THE YSA

There are differences argued out in the YSA, and it is clear there will no longer be a YSA convention where there are unanimous votes on reports. That reflects the health and growth of the YSA....

Jack Barnes, "Political Report to the February 1970 Plenum of the National Committee of the Socialist Workers Party," in Towards an American Socialist Revolution, p. 185 (Pathfinder Press, 1971)

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- *Resolving the International Crisis of Revolutionary Leadership Today* by four suspended NC members (8/83)

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