

Information, Education, Discussion

BULLETIN in Defense of Marxism

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

REPORTS ON THE WORLD CONGRESS OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

by Steve Bloom, F.I.T. Delegate

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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.

“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.

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A STEP FORWARD FOR THE FI

by Steve Bloom

The recently concluded world congress of the Fourth International took place over a period of ten days. The agenda was:

- 1) World Political Situation
- 2) Permanent Revolution/Workers' and Farmers' Government
- 3) Central America
- 4) Poland
- 5) Dictatorship of the Proletariat and Workers' Democracy
- 6) Building the Fourth International
- 7) Election of IEC

In addition there were reports from a series of commissions established to discuss problems in specific countries, including one to take up the expulsions from the U.S. SWP.

Before the congress we in the F.I.T. set a number of goals and objectives which we thought it should accomplish. These were covered in the article, "Tasks of the World Congress," in Bulletin IDOM No. 15. They included a definitive rejection of both the liquidationist political course of the SWP leadership and the organizational purge in the party. On these questions the congress made correct decisions. We also put forward the need for a bold campaign to involve the entire membership of the FI in the effort to defend and apply the program and traditions of the world Trotskyist movement. Although the correct political basis was laid for such an effort by the congress, the practical tasks involved were not specifically laid out, and this remains to be undertaken as a project of the incoming leadership of the International.

The F.I.T. also wanted to use the opportunity of the world congress to explain the specific viewpoint and perspectives of our tendency--within the context of support to the majority positions presented by the United Secretariat. We hoped to influence the overall approach of the majority on a number of questions.

APPEALS FROM U.S.A.

No. 16 of the Bulletin IDOM printed the motions adopted by the congress concerning the appeals of F.I.T. and

Socialist Action for reinstatement into the SWP. In accepting the collective appeals of F.I.T. and S.A. the congress agreed with our contention that the expulsions from the SWP constituted a collective political purge. The congress voted to demand that the SWP reinstate all members of F.I.T. and S.A. who had been expelled from the SWP, and accord us all of the rights of membership in a democratic-centralist organization along with the responsibilities of such membership. In any event we will be considered full members of the Fourth International, to the extent this is compatible with U.S. law, and relations with our two organizations will be maintained accordingly. In addition to our collective appeals, the individual appeal of Eileen Gersh was upheld, since she is not a member of either the F.I.T. or S.A. The same demand was made for her reintegration into the SWP.

These motions coincide completely with the proposals we had made on the U.S. situation before the congress, and we supported them wholeheartedly. The Socialist Action delegation did the same. They were adopted, and counter-motions supported by the SWP were rejected by an overwhelming vote.

On other organizational matters which will be of interest to Bulletin IDOM readers: a motion was adopted noting that Pedro Camejo has not carried out any of the obligations of membership in the FI for an extended period, and for this reason he can no longer be considered a member. Camejo's political trajectory away from Trotskyism was noted in the discussion. In Canada, formal relations were established with the pro-FI forces which are not part of the official section--Gauche Socialiste in Quebec and the Alliance for Socialist Action in English-speaking Canada. (An article by Barry Weisleder on the formation of ASA appeared in Bulletin IDOM No. 15).

POLITICAL DEBATE

If there was a basic theme of the general political deliberations at the congress--in particular the earliest agenda points on the world political

situation and Central America--it was the need to get involved as strongly as possible in the revolutionary developments of Central America. It was also noted that the Nicaraguan and Salvadoran revolutions have stimulated a new interest in revolutionary ideas and the emergence of similar revolutionary currents in other parts of Latin America. A prime objective of sections of the FI in Latin America must be to become part of this process wherever it is occurring. In no case can we counterpose ourselves in a sectarian fashion to others who are moving in a revolutionary direction.

This was seen as a turn by the International, a means of correcting a serious error made regarding Nicaragua at the last world congress. The majority argued strongly--and correctly--that the positions adopted in 1979 did not recognize the reality of Sandinista power and what that power meant for the Nicaraguan workers and peasants.

In fact, no one at this congress advocated maintaining the approach to Nicaragua adopted in 1979. The resolution that was adopted then assessed the situation after the overthrow of Somoza as one of "dual power," between the FSLN representing the workers and peasants on the one hand, and the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie on the other. The majority now agrees that the 1979 revolution firmly established the FSLN in power, and that this constituted the beginning of the proletarian revolution--the socialist revolution--in Nicaragua; the dictatorship of the proletariat.

At the same time, it was emphasized, recognizing the reality and importance of Sandinista power cannot mean for the Fourth International as a whole what it has meant for the Barnes faction--the abandoning of the political, programmatic, and organizational perspectives of the International. This was also a theme that ran through all of the discussions of the majority -- in particular during the agenda point on "Permanent Revolution/Workers' and Farmers' Government."

The F.I.T. is in complete solidarity with these two main goals of the congress. Some delegates summed up the problem as one of establishing organizational flexibility, while at the same time maintaining political and programmatic firmness. Of course, this is not an easy thing to do. There will be problems and pitfalls, and success is by no means assured. But if the FI is capable of balancing these two factors correctly, it will be able to move forward out of the congress and make important gains.

PERMANENT REVOLUTION

There were three agenda items that explicitly took up the major programmatic issues which have been at the center of the debate with the U.S. SWP leadership. The first of these was the discussion on "Permanent Revolution/Workers' and Farmers' Government."

In the period leading up to the congress, the Barnes faction declared that the most important question facing the FI today was the workers' and farmers' government. They demanded, and got, a special point on the agenda of the congress to discuss this question.

Then, during the consideration of the agenda immediately before the congress, the SWP leaders declared that a separate point was not necessary, that their views on this should be counterposed in the debate to the defense of permanent revolution presented in majority documents. This was a correct counterposition. The SWP had devoted many pages in the public press (the International Socialist Review and the New Internationalist) to what began as thinly veiled--and later became open--public denunciations of permanent revolution, much of it in the name of their new interpretation of the "workers' and farmers' government."

For this reason, delegates to the congress expected to hear a genuine debate which would explain the Barnes faction's motivation for abandoning permanent revolution, and would attempt to win the FI over to this point of view. Such a presentation of their perspective was an elementary responsibility for the U.S. SWP delegation. But this was not done.

The majority reporter -- and the written text presented by the United Secretariat majority under this point--did take up in detail the historical significance of permanent revolution, its continued relevance to today's struggles, and the false nature of the presentation of permanent revolution in the schema of the Barnes faction. The report for the SWP, however, limited itself to vague generalities about the need for a strategic alliance between workers and peasants--an issue that has never been in dispute. It never even bothered to take up the programmatic questions.

POLITICAL REVOLUTION AND 'DEMOCRATIZATION'

In the debate on Poland, the fundamental programmatic issue concerned the perspectives and character of the political revolution. There was also a dis-

cussion here of the practical realities of political revolution in Poland during the rise of Solidarnosc, and particularly in the period just before the Jaruzelski coup in December 1981.

The political revolution is a question on which the SWP leadership has not gone as far in explicitly abandoning the programmatic heritage of Trotskyism as they have on permanent revolution. Nevertheless, serious inroads have been made--including rationalizing their refusal to do anything to mobilize American working people in defense of our Polish sisters and brothers after Jaruzelski's crackdown. The concept of political revolution has disappeared from the propaganda of the party. In a formal sense, however, it remains part of the program, and there are still occasional references to it in comments by party leaders.

What seems to be occurring is an attempt by the Barnes faction to redefine political revolution--to take out of it any revolutionary content and transform it into an effort at reform of the bureaucratized workers' states. This is referred to at times as a "democratization" or "regeneration" of the workers' state. This general approach was continued at the world congress.

(It should be noted here that in the early stages of the process of rejecting permanent revolution there were similar efforts to try to redefine its meaning--to limit its applicability, to dissolve it into some more general conception, or change it from the idea of a thoroughgoing fight to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat--but without openly rejecting the term itself.)

The perspectives of the congress majority on this point were quite clear and quite contrary to those of the SWP. The state apparatus in the bureaucratized workers' states has been constructed to defend the interests of the bureaucracy. Even in the USSR there is little, if anything, left of the original content of soviet institutions. They have degenerated far beyond the stage of any conceivable "regeneration."

The tasks of the antibureaucratic political revolution with regard to this state apparatus are similar to the tasks which the social revolution faces with regard to the state apparatus which defends the bourgeoisie. It must be completely demolished, and new state institutions constructed which will be democratically controlled by the workers and peasants themselves. Of course this new state structure, like the old one, will defend the socialist property forms which have been created in these countries. (Actually it will defend them better.) It is because of this that we speak of a political and not a social revolution.

In an anticapitalist revolution the working class and its allies must seize power, smash the old state, and construct a new one which they control in order simply to begin the process of expropriation and socialization of the means of production. Conquering state power--the political task--is merely a means to a much larger goal. The tasks of the antibureaucratic political revolution, on the other hand, are completed when it destroys and reconstructs the political superstructure of society. This is because the expropriation of the bourgeoisie--the social and economic basis for the construction of socialism



INPREKOR Nr 17
ZIMA 1985

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Kryzys gospodarczy

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**Polish Inprekor
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--has already been accomplished in the deformed and degenerated workers' states.

Of course, this does not mean that elements which are broken away from the old institutions cannot be incorporated into the new. Even in the anticapitalist revolution, for example, the task of the revolutionary class is to win over sections of the bourgeois army and include it in its own fighting force. This kind of process will also take place in the political revolution. But in the course of any revolution, social or political, such segments of the old institutions will have to be qualitatively transformed (destruction of the officer corps, for example, restructuring the functioning of the military units, etc.). In this, too, we see that the tasks of the political revolution with regard to the state apparatus are similar in their fundamentals to those of a social revolution.

SOCIALIST DEMOCRACY DEBATE

The debate over "the dictatorship of the proletariat and socialist democracy" is also worth discussing from the point of view of what it reveals about the present retreat from revolutionary Marxism by the SWP leadership. At the 1979 world congress a programmatic document was introduced, which everyone expected to be non-controversial. It was called "Socialist Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat," and took up our understanding of the importance of proletarian democracy in the process of the socialist revolution--both before and after the conquest of power. This is a question on which the FI has a long and honorable tradition--one which has never been questioned or challenged within our ranks until now.

Just before the 1979 congress, however, the U.S. SWP introduced what it presented as a counter-resolution, called "Socialism and Democracy." This counter-resolution seemed to differ from the majority draft only in tone, emphasis, and a few minor details. This was very confusing. (The two resolutions are in print in the special edition of Intercontinental Press, "1979 World Congress of the Fourth International," which is available from Pathfinder Press. A discussion of some of the differences between them appeared in Bulletin IDOM No. 14 in the article by Naomi Allen, "Through the Looking Glass with Barnes and Sheppard.")

We can see now that this was the beginning of a profound questioning by

the Barnes leadership of the basic program of our movement on the problems of workers' democracy. This too, like their evolution on political revolution, has not been developed as explicitly as the revision of permanent revolution. They try to maintain some of the old terminology, while putting into it a new meaning and content. But the discussion at the just concluded congress reveals that on this point too they have traveled a good way down the road to completely transforming our program since 1979.

In 1979 no binding vote was taken on these resolutions, and it was agreed to have more discussion. At the 1985 congress the majority document, with some amendments and updating, was put on the agenda for a vote, and was adopted by the delegates. This time, however, the SWP did not present their counter-resolution. Instead they objected to adopting any resolution on the question at all.

Anyone who is familiar with the present positions of the Barnes faction and who reads the old resolution they proposed in 1979 can see a number of political positions contained in it that they can no longer support. But they also, apparently, cannot argue openly for the actual position they now hold. The solution they came up with was to simply oppose adopting any position at all.

This was rejected by the majority, since our views on these questions are a fundamental part of our program--something which divides us from all other tendencies vying for leadership of the working class around the world. It is completely appropriate to adopt a programmatic resolution which codifies our positions. A document which clearly affirms our view--that the socialist revolution requires the fullest possible flowering of democracy--will help make us more attractive to radicalizing workers, and cut across the attempts of ruling class ideologists to identify socialism with totalitarianism and Stalinist dictatorship.

WORKERS' AND FARMERS' GOVERNMENT

On all of these programmatic questions, the F.I.T. in the United States is in basic agreement with the broad majority in the FI. There are, however, areas in which our tendency does not have the same approach as most others in the international majority. Although these are secondary to our overall agreement on the fundamental program-

matic questions and the correct class analysis of the Nicaraguan revolution, they remain significant. One of the most important of our disagreements is the rejection by the dominant tendency in the majority of the concept of the workers' and farmers' government. This is not seen by most of those in the FI who defend permanent revolution as a useful tool for explaining the dynamics of the transition from a bourgeois state to a workers' state.

We have submitted our views on this in the form of the "Theses on the Workers' and Farmers' Government." We took extended time during the debate at the congress to present our own specific viewpoint within the context of the majority position. (See p. 8 for the text of those remarks).

We did find an interest in our ideas at the congress, and a general acknowledgment that we need a thorough discussion on this point. And not all of those who supported the majority position disagreed with our approach.

There are, of course, many other political questions which remain to be resolved. Some of these concern issues which simply did not get adequate discussion given the objective difficulties of the congress. Others deal with disagreements and problems which do not have high priority at this point--until the main questions facing the International today are adequately dealt with. All of them will require additional experience and continuing discussion.

It is a problem that the congress itself did not take action to authorize such a continuing discussion--on the workers' and farmers' government or on other matters. All questions of continuing discussions (there were quite a number proposed) were referred to the incoming IEC, and then by the IEC to the United Secretariat. The precise mechanics of how this discussion will continue remains to be determined. The organization of this, along with a major educational campaign, is a necessity in order for the FI to carry out the third major task which we in the F.I.T. posed for the congress before it began and which we still consider to be essential--the mobilization and education of the entire membership to deal with the big programmatic issues in dispute and their involvement in the process of working out their solutions. This remains as a challenge to the incoming international leadership.

* * *

An objective assessment of this world congress must start from the two

essential tasks which it was able to accomplish: the reaffirmation of the programmatic traditions of the Fourth International combined with a creative application of them to the present world situation; and the rejection of the organizational purge carried out by the SWP leadership in the United States with a clear demand by our world movement that the unity of the FI be maintained. We cannot underestimate the remaining problems and difficulties which were not resolved, and in some cases could not have been resolved. But with these two fundamental conquests, the basis has been laid for continued progress in constructing the world party of socialist revolution which is so desperately needed by working people around the globe.

Without question, the congress represented a severe setback for the Barnes faction in the FI. The moral authority and political influence of the SWP leadership is at its lowest ebb since reunification of the Fourth International. They were unable to influence anyone who did not already agree with them on any of the substantive issues -- either organizational or political.

March 1, 1985

A pamphlet about an issue debated in the FI between its 1979 and 1985 congresses

Theses on the Workers' and Farmers' Government

by the Fourth Internationalist Caucus

The Workers' and Farmers' Government and the Socialist Revolution

by Steve Bloom

\$2.00

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

NOTES OF A DELEGATE

Attending a world congress of the Fourth International for the first time is a memorable experience, which renews the sense of what internationalism is all about. Spending an extended period living, meeting, discussing informally, and simply socializing with Fourth Internationalists from around the world gives a feeling for the broad diversity of experience, theoretical background, objective reality of the class struggle, and a host of other factors which go into making up the cadres of our world party.

Welding all of these elements together into a coherent and homogeneous political force is not an easy task. It requires patience, education, and most of all a genuine effort by each component of the International to understand and honestly discuss other points of view.

* * *

International collaboration is a two-way street. On one side, organizations from each country contribute their own understanding as parts of the whole. But any specific national experience will inevitably be one-sided. A national organization can compensate for this only by being part of the International, and gaining an appreciation of how others, with different experiences and in different circumstances, view the same or similar problems. Simultaneously, the International as a whole benefits from this process, because it is able to make its own positions more complete only by considering as many different sides to the question, contributed by as many specific national experiences, as possible--integrating these into a cohesive international approach.

One could see this process actually taking place, in a limited way, during the course of the congress itself--with individuals and delegations offering suggestions or amendments, and having their ideas subjected to the scrutiny of the congress as a whole. Some ideas would be accepted as part of the broader perspectives, others would be altered or dropped by those proposing them, while still others remained points of dis-

agreement to one extent or another. All of this contributed to the process of hammering out the general line which was finally adopted.

* * *

Some of the events of the congress inspired warm feelings of comradeship and solidarity. One of the early agenda points was a recounting of the names and accomplishments of members and leaders of the FI who died in the five years since the last congress. These included leaders of the SWP, whose lives and party-building records I was intimately familiar with, Farrell Dobbs and Tom Kerry; Larry Stewart, who was a founding member of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency and on the editorial board of the Bulletin in Defense of Marxism; international leaders whose names I knew from the history of our world movement, Pierre Frank and Peng Shu Tse; along with many other, both leaders and rank and file members.

The final item before adjournment was the singing of the "Internationale." This anthem is sung after every national convention of the SWP, as well as on other occasions, and I have joined in many times. But it took on a new meaning when those around me were harmonizing in a dozen or more different languages.

In between these experiences the congress recognized five new sections--including groups from Brazil, Uruguay, and Senegal--and three new sympathizing organizations. In revolutionary groups, new members are taken in most of the time by ones or twos. Each individual is a major accomplishment. It was a good feeling, then, when the congress recognized entire organizations including hundreds of members.

* * *

Another exciting event was the Central America solidarity workshop. Delegates from Latin America, Europe, and North America, meeting together to discuss what we could do to defend the revolution in Nicaragua and help advance the struggles of the peoples of El Salvador, Guatemala, and other Central American nations. Everyone saw the defense of the basic right of self-determination and opposition to U.S. impe-

rialist intervention as a primary task and an elementary internationalist responsibility.

Several weeks before the congress, the F.I.T. had written a letter suggesting that it take up the possibility of international protests in solidarity with the April 20 demonstration in the United States. The SWP came to the meeting of the International Executive Committee held just before the congress with a similar proposal. The Central America workshop appointed a committee to draft such a resolution, which was adopted by the congress. (It was printed in issue No. 16 of Bulletin IDOM, and has also appeared in the Militant and Intercontinental Press.)

The same workshop also heard a report about a new magazine, Panorama, which is being published in Mexico by Fourth Internationalists. This magazine is intended to be a forum for discussion of the problems of the revolution in Central America and the Caribbean. Its material is mostly in Spanish, but includes some articles in English--to reach interested people in the English-speaking Caribbean--and this will make it attractive to North American readers.

* * *

There was a great deal of talk, throughout the congress, of a crisis in the FI. It is clear that the events of the world revolution over the last five years have caused considerable reflection on the entire past as well as the future of our world movement. Many problems, many issues are being raised, and

many questions remain to be satisfactorily addressed.

But whatever the problems and difficulties confronting those of us who are part of the FI majority in this situation--and I think the term "crisis" is not inappropriate--they are the problems of real organizations, involved in the real class struggle, trying to come to terms with the reality of the world revolution. This is in stark contrast to the crisis of those, such as the Barnes leadership of the SWP, who reject the history and traditions of the FI. Their crisis is one of programmatic degeneration and stagnation, which is quite a different thing.

A few delegates who had attended previous congresses expressed the view that whatever difficulties and problems we might see in the present situation, the 1985 congress represented, at least in some respects, an advance over previous ones. In 1979 the International suffered the split of the Morenoites. At the previous two congresses there had been a paralysis resulting from the faction fight over the guerrilla warfare strategy in Latin America and other questions.

The workings of this congress were far from perfect, and a whole series of political challenges lie ahead. But in the opinion of this delegate, there is a reasonable basis for being optimistic about resolving them successfully. The congress made correct decisions on the most essential questions. From that foundation we can now move ahead.

S.B.

LEON TROTSKY and the ORGANIZATIONAL PRINCIPLES of the REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

By Dianne Feeley, Paul Le Blanc, and Tom Twiss

\$5.00

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

IN DEFENSE OF THE WORKERS' AND FARMERS' GOVERNMENT CONCEPT

I am speaking in support of the viewpoint expressed in the "Theses on the Workers' and Farmers' Government" by the Fourth Internationalist Tendency in the United States. Our perspectives are not counterposed to the defense of permanent revolution presented by the majority reporter. This is the key question facing our world movement today: we must unite to defeat the programmatic challenge confronting us. It is only in this context that we can understand other differences which do exist on the workers' and farmers' government.

This is why we did not ask for a counter-report under this agenda item, and are limiting ourselves to extended time within the context of the majority position, even though that means restricting the amount of time we have to speak and explain our views.

I. WORKERS' AND FARMERS' GOVERNMENT VS. PERMANENT REVOLUTION

There is a reason why the SWP leadership formulates its programmatic revisions in terms of the "workers' and farmers' government." The idea of the workers' and farmers' government has a long and venerable history as part of the traditions of Leninism and the Left Opposition--ever since the Bolshevik revolution of 1917. By pretending to defend the "workers' and farmers' government" theory the Barnes faction can cover themselves with an orthodox cloak.

This, of course, would be impossible if they focused their attacks on the actual issue--which is our understanding and concept of permanent revolution. The proposals of the Barnes faction, if carried through to the end, can only mean the programmatic and organizational liquidation of the FI. That is why the struggle against this liquidationist

These extended comments at the world congress were made under the agenda point "Permanent Revolution/Workers' and Farmers' Government." (edited)

challenge must be the overriding concern at this world congress. We must defeat the programmatic revisions on all fronts.

Nevertheless, there is need for a discussion of the workers' and farmers' government question in its own right. The offensive of the Barnes grouping has led to a great deal of confusion about the correct relationship between workers' and farmers' government and permanent revolution.

The counterposition of these two ideas by the revisionist current is a trick, and is completely false. Lenin, Trotsky, and the Comintern in its early days, and later Joseph Hansen, the SWP, and even the FI as a whole, accepted and utilized the idea of a workers' and farmers' government--without in any way questioning our basic strategic concepts. Today, the task before us is to codify and explain the precise meaning of this term, and to rescue it from the epigones of Joseph Hansen, who are using their distortion of the idea of the workers' and farmers' government to undermine everything Joseph Hansen spent his entire life trying to build.

II. NICARAGUA

To pose the issues most clearly, let's take up the specific, concrete event of the Nicaraguan revolution. First, is there a workers' and farmers' government in Nicaragua today? Yes, there is, if we correctly understand the term to indicate the transitional period between the overthrow of bourgeois military and political power and the decisive expropriation of bourgeois economic power. The workers' and farmers' government in Nicaragua was created in July 1979 with the overthrow of Somoza.

Second, is there a proletarian dictatorship in Nicaragua? Yes, there is. If there is a single question that distinguishes the perspectives of the F.I.T. theses from every other position in this debate, it is our rejection of a necessary counterposition between the

workers' and farmers' government and the dictatorship of the proletariat.

On the question: Is there a bourgeois state or a workers' state in Nicaragua? I will postpone my reply for a few moments. We need first to get a grasp of the concepts "dictatorship of the proletariat" and "workers' state" from a more general theoretical point of view in order to understand their correct application in Nicaragua, as well as their relationship to the workers' and farmers' government.

III. WORKERS' AND FARMERS' GOVERNMENT AND DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT

So let's ask the question: What is the relationship of the workers' and farmers' government to the dictatorship of the proletariat? Should these two concepts be counterposed?

At times the SWP leadership will go so far as to say that the workers' and farmers' government is "the first stage of the dictatorship of the proletariat" but it more commonly insists that the "real" dictatorship of the proletariat does not commence until the qualitative transformation of the bourgeois economy. This is false. The dictatorship of the proletariat refers precisely to the political rule of the working class and poor peasantry.

The SWP leaders use this schematic definition of the dictatorship of the proletariat (as equal to a nationalized economy) to justify its rejection of permanent revolution, which is, after all, nothing more than the affirmation of the fight for the proletarian dictatorship. They "prove" permanent revolution's ultraleftism and impose upon it the idea of immediate expropriation of all, or most, bourgeois property. (This is the "cup of instant coffee" approach to revolution that Maurice Bishop correctly polemicized against, but which has nothing whatsoever in common with permanent revolution.)

On the other side of the debate, we have a similar counterposition of workers' and farmers' government and proletarian dictatorship by most of those in the International who defend permanent revolution. This was capsulized in the article for the LCR discussion by Comrade Aubin, who posed the question in his title: "On Nicaragua: Workers' and Peasants' Government or Dictatorship of the Proletariat?" The line of thought represented by this article accepts the counterposition developed by the Barnes school as genuine. This is a mistake.

The current represented by the

Tendency for the Unification of the Fourth International defends permanent revolution on a theoretical plane, unlike the Barnes faction. But it accepts the false idea of Barnes that the proletarian dictatorship is essentially synonymous with a predominantly expropriated economy.

The Fourth International has always affirmed that what we are fighting for, what our program calls for, is a revolution led by the proletariat in alliance with the poor peasantry and other social layers which can be won to the side of the working class. Such a revolution must impose the political rule of the proletariat and poor peasantry--the dictatorship of the proletariat--which will proceed to "wrest by degrees" (at whatever pace is prudent and necessary) control over bourgeois property.

Such a proletarian dictatorship, it is clear, rules during the period which is properly covered by the workers' and farmers' government characterization. In such a case there is absolutely no differentiation needed between the workers' and farmers' government and the proletarian dictatorship, and the idea of a workers' and farmers' government is, to quote the Transitional Program, "merely a popular designation for the already established dictatorship of the proletariat."

This is what happened in the Russian revolution, and it is also what has taken place in Nicaragua, in our view. In fact, if all we had to take into account were the cases of Russia in 1917 and Nicaragua in 1979, there would be little need for the concept of the workers' and farmers' government as a specific scientific entity and we could simply subsume the entire process into the idea of the proletarian dictatorship.

The problem is that we have a great deal more to account for. We believe that in cases like Eastern Europe, China, Vietnam, Algeria, and Cuba, the proletariat and poor peasantry never exercised their political power in any meaningful sense during the period of transition. In these cases it is essential to make a sharp distinction between the workers' and farmers' government and the dictatorship of the proletariat. The latter is not consummated until the petty-bourgeois leadership of the revolution commits itself to a program of expropriation of the bourgeoisie.

I recognize full well that there is not agreement on this approach--especially among those of us who defend the perspectives of permanent revolution

within the International today. But it is significant that Trotsky spends some time in the Transitional Program discussing the dynamics of precisely this kind of petty-bourgeois workers' and farmers' government--in the context of what it would have meant if the Soviets had taken power in Russia at a time when the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries still dominated them.

Trotsky clearly states that in such a case the workers' and farmers' government would not have constituted the dictatorship of the proletariat, but only "a brief interlude" on the road to it. So we must conclude that for Trotsky, and for us, such a dynamic maintains its theoretical importance, even if we do not agree on whether it has ever actually occurred in life.

The Theses of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency insist on maintaining this two-sided approach to the workers' and farmers' government. It is absolutely incorrect to treat the workers' and farmers' government and the dictatorship of the proletariat as absolute, rigid, and mutually exclusive categories.

IV. WORKERS' AND FARMERS' GOVERNMENT AND WORKERS' STATE

What about the problem of the class character of the state during this transitional period?

The SWP leadership puts forward the view that since the social foundations of a workers' state have not yet been developed, and the economy remains predominantly bourgeois, the state is therefore bourgeois. The TUFU position agrees with the SWP on this point. We might reduce this to the idea that "if there is not yet a workers' state there must remain a bourgeois state."

On the other side, we have an opposite view, which can be summarized as: "If there is no longer a bourgeois state, there must be a workers' state." Since the repressive might of the old bourgeois order has been smashed, this line of reasoning goes, there exists a workers' state regardless of the kind of economy it rests on. This reduces the question of the state to the classical "bodies of armed men"--and today we would add "armed women."

Both of these formulas are one-sided and schematic. What we need, most of all, is to understand that the process of transition from a bourgeois state to a workers' state will create transitional forms. What is necessary is to define in each case the degree to

which the bourgeois state has been overthrown on the one hand, and the degree to which the tasks of the revolution, the task of establishing a new state, remain to be accomplished on the other. This process is not advanced at all by arguing over formal and rigid categories.

In one sense even a full and healthy "workers' state" remains a bourgeois state in that it continues to defend bourgeois norms of distribution. When it ceases to do this, it will also cease to have any reason for existence and will have withered away. The very term "workers' state" is a contradiction. Of course, the contradiction is not really one of terminology. The terminology simply reflects the contradiction that exists in real life.

Lenin referred to the Soviet workers' state as a "bourgeois state without the bourgeoisie." This too captured the dialectical contradiction of a process which he was trying to explain. He also frequently referred to "the process of constructing a new kind of state" after the October revolution, and never, so far as I know, simply to a "workers' state," without modification, as some kind of finished entity, an accomplished fact.

The term "workers' state" is a general concept that requires modification in any specific case. We characterize most of the countries where capitalism has been overthrown as "deformed and degenerated" workers' states. If we forget this, and start to think of them simply as "workers' states" in the abstract, without modification, serious dangers can arise.

It is completely incorrect to characterize the state as proletarian in a situation of a petty-bourgeois workers' and farmers' government (though even here it is true in a very limited sense). Such a characterization leads to severe theoretical problems in our view.

In some ways it is correct to say that a transitional period in which the dictatorship of the proletariat is established means that a workers' state has already been created. (Again, if we had only the cases of Nicaragua and the USSR we might even assert that this is the only possible reality, as the Bolsheviks and the Comintern did.) But if anyone wants us to seriously consider such a proposal, they must discuss very precisely in what sense the term "workers' state" is used here, and find an appropriate modifier for it. (One that occurs to me is "embryonic" workers' state, which is an apt analogy in many

ways.) They must also propose another way to distinguish between the different phases of the process.

Whatever formula we find to characterize the state in Nicaragua, it must capture the reality of a process which is still going on. The Central America resolution refers to "the first steps of construction of a workers state, which has to be consolidated like any emerging workers state." This formulation isn't bad. At the end of the same section, however, where the resolution refers simply to "the new workers state" it reflects the kind of schematic thinking we must assiduously avoid.

Those, such as the SWP leadership or TUFFI, who say that the Nicaraguan state is simply "bourgeois" also present a one-sided and schematic analysis.

In general, as I said earlier, I think it is far less important to come up with a neat terminological solution, at this point, than to be as precise as possible about our concrete analysis of each individual situation.

V. CONCLUSION

We cannot simply reject the importance of the workers' and farmers' government concept and reduce the problem of the transition to the question of the proletarian dictatorship and the workers' state. Revolutionary theory should be a guide to understanding and action. There is a basic historical law that the consciousness of the vanguard will lag behind events. But we should mold our theoretical tools to try to help ensure that our lag will be as short as possible.

It took five years for the majority of the Fourth International to recognize that in July of 1979 the FSLN took power in Nicaragua, and began a process of using that power to advance the interests of the workers and poor peasants. This is much too long for our lag of consciousness to last.

I believe that one of the reasons for that lag was the failure by the majority to appreciate the concept of the workers' and farmers' government as a means of characterizing and dealing with the transitional phases of the revolutionary process. It is understandably difficult to jump into an assessment that what has been established in a revolution like Nicaragua's or Grenada's is a proletarian dictatorship and a workers' state when the situation has so many contradictory aspects.

The value of this tool in that situation should be obvious, and is not

altered by the fact that the Barnes current has raised a fundamental programmatic revision in its name. It is not the theory of the workers' and farmers' government that caused the Barnes faction to degenerate theoretically, but rather their theoretical retreat from revolutionary Marxism that has caused them to seize on and distort this valuable concept. I end, then, where I began, with the need to recapture the workers' and farmers' government and reaffirm its genuine continuity as part of our program and heritage.

Permanent Revolution in Nicaragua

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.

\$3.00

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

HOW TO RESOLVE SPLIT IN THE U.S.

You are faced with over 100 cases; thousands of pages of documentation. How can delegates to this world congress ever determine the real facts involved? The minority reporter from the commission makes a big point of this difficulty.

But I would like to pose a simple problem that can help to make things clear. The U.S. SWP leadership is not a new and inexperienced one. It is a leadership with long experience. Over the past few years these comrades have made a series of conscious choices--and they must now take responsibility for the consequences of those choices: 1) they began a process of revision of the fundamental program and theory of the party; 2) they did not do this openly until after the end of the 1981 convention, when all discussion in the party would be closed; 3) while writing articles and making speeches renouncing our past they prohibited the formation of any tendencies or factions in the party and forbade any discussion of the new line by the ranks until the next pre-convention period.

Now I ask you, simply take these facts. We are all intelligent people in this room. What would you expect to happen in any party where the leadership behaved in this fashion? What would happen in your party under similar conditions?

This is an experienced leadership. They knew what would happen. They knew that those who opposed their line would try to find a means to express that opposition. That was inevitable. Yet this, and simply this, is what they point to as the so-called "violations of norms."

Even with such provocative behavior by the party leaders it was still necessary to engineer blatant frame-ups. Even with such provocative behavior by the party leaders those who disagreed exercised so much restraint for two years that when it came time for the next pre-convention discussion the convention had to be postponed for an additional year before they could find an excuse to expel all those they suspected of being oppositionists.

They have tried to assert that this whole development was some kind of conspiracy by the four expelled NC members; that we organized a "secret faction." But you don't need any conspiracy theories to explain the opposition that developed in the SWP during the last few years. Any problems the central party leaders had in enforcing their bureaucratic norms under these conditions were a direct result of the circumstances they themselves created. It is they, the SWP leaders, and not those they bureaucratically ousted from the party, who must take responsibility for the present situation.

They frequently refer to the "proletarian norms" of the SWP that they claim to be upholding. But, in fact, they have violated the most fundamental proletarian norm of all -- that the program belongs to the party as a whole, not simply to its leadership, and it cannot be changed without a thorough discussion and democratic decision by the entire organization.

The SWP leadership objects to recognition of F.I.T. and S.A. members as full and legitimate members of the Fourth International (to the extent this is compatible with U.S. law), members who the FI believes should all be united in the SWP. They say it is wrong to recognize three separate entities in this way. But if there are three groups of Fourth Internationalists in the U.S. after this world congress--which the delegates here believe should be united in the SWP and not separate--everyone in the Fourth International will know who is responsible. Everyone in the International will know the reason why.

If the SWP leadership wants to avoid such an eventuality, it is clear what you should do: carry out the decisions of the congress; readmit the expelled members; open the discussion in the party which is all we have been asking for three years; let the party decide the disputed questions after a truly democratic discussion on the political and programmatic issues. We will abide by the discipline of the party and by the decisions of such a convention.

You are afraid of that kind of discussion in the party because you do not have confidence in your own ideas. That's why you have done everything in your power to try to avoid it. If you refuse to carry out the decisions of this congress, everyone in the Fourth International will know the reason why!

These comments were made during the world congress discussion of the report by the Commission on Appeals from the United States of America. (edited)

THE 'CRISIS IN THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL'

Many speakers, many of the reporters, on this and other points have referred to the "crisis in the Fourth International." The main subject I would like to address in these comments might be entitled, "Their Crisis and Ours."

There is a crisis in the FI today. It is caused by real revolutionary events in the world, to which our world party must react. But all parts of the FI are not in an equal crisis. The report by the SWP under this point was not irrelevant from this point of view, because it reveals the depth of the crisis of orientation from which the party is suffering.

In their report were a number of important shifts in the theory of the workers' and farmers' government from what they have been presenting up to now. It was explained that if the socialist revolution had taken place first in the developed countries we would probably never have noticed the workers' and farmers' government, because in such revolutions the taking of power will be "almost simultaneous" with the expropriation of the bourgeoisie. This is quite a change from the 1982 report, "For a Workers and Farmers Government in the United States," which asserted that this kind of government was a necessary phase in all revolutions--including in the U.S.A.

Does this have any theoretical significance regarding the new line of the SWP? Perhaps it does, we can't tell at this point. I'll reserve judgment. Tomorrow we might be told the exact opposite again. This is what has happened on the question of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Occasionally it is said the workers' and farmers' government is the "first phase" of that dictatorship. Mostly the two are counterposed. Now we are informed it is the first phase of the proletarian dictatorship "only when it is successful" in

carrying through the transformation to a workers' state.

What does all this confusion and shifting of ground reflect? It reflects a complete lack of any real perspective--a crisis of perspective. For the SWP leadership theory has no scientific meaning or value and is developed ad hoc, empirically, to fit the practical needs of any given moment.

We had an example of this also in the discussion on socialist democracy. Those who support the SWP informed us that the entire method of the majority document is wrong--that it is "normative" (that is, it sets up abstract norms which can have little relation to real revolutions, and will therefore be disorienting). Yet five years ago these same comrades presented us with their own "normative" text. The problem is that they cannot endorse now the things they said five years ago--because they have traversed too much political ground. They don't have the courage to honestly present their latest ideas, so they find an excuse not to do so by raising spurious objections to "normative" documents.

All of this reflects nothing except their own crisis of perspective.

A number of comrades during the congress have spoken about the failures of the Fourth International. It is important to come to terms with our failures, though it is wrong to exaggerate these, as has been done by some. I want to discuss one of our failures in light of the clear position against permanent revolution in the report for the U.S. SWP. It is our most recent failure, and one of our worst--our failure in Iran.

What was the problem in Iran? Was it "sectarian Trotskyism"? Was it an unwarranted clinging to permanent revolution? Was it a refusal to find new and creative political methods?

No! It was that comrades failed to understand and apply that one little sentence that was explicitly thrown into the wastebasket by the SWP reporter: "The road to democracy in the semi-colonial countries must pass through the dictatorship of the proletariat."

The leadership of the U.S. SWP and

These are excerpts of comments during the world congress discussion under the agenda point "Building the Fourth International." (edited)

those in Iran who thought along the same lines forgot this basic truth, which led to the squandering of one of the most promising opportunities in the history of the Fourth International.

The problem in Iran wasn't that we were doctrinaire or that we didn't look for "new" approaches. What was needed in Iran was a good dose of programmatic firmness, a good dose of Trotskyism, a good dose of permanent revolution.

So we can all see clearly what would result if we adopt the alternatives presented here by the U.S. SWP for building the Fourth International. Under this point on the agenda they have finally gotten around to presenting their views on the workers' and farmers' government, in a report that refuses to deal with the real problems we face in building our world party. The workers' and farmers' government is their perspective for building the FI. That is all they have to offer.

Yes, there is a crisis in the Fourth International. But no, thank you, comrades, we are not interested in substituting the crisis of the SWP--a crisis of programmatic degeneration and

political stagnation--for our own. Our crisis is one of how to deal with real problems, and of a genuine involvement in the class struggle today. We will have problems and difficulties in resolving our crisis, but only a sect can exist, in a world like the one we live in today, without such problems and difficulties.

Our crisis does represent a big challenge, and of course, in a broader sense, the crisis of the U.S. SWP is a part of our own. The majority report provides the framework in which we can deal with these challenges.

We will need a broad political discussion and education in the International after this world congress. We must involve the entire membership in a process of working out the correct perspective. This is a time which we must seize, which the international leadership must seize, to educate all members of the FI on the issues in dispute. It will be a vital task and a big challenge for the incoming IEC to organize our internal discussion following the world congress with this in mind.

Documents from the Struggle in the SWP and the FI

Platform of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency — 75¢

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and
The Workers' and Farmers' Government and the Socialist Revolution — \$2.00**

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

F.I.T. CALLS SECOND NATIONAL CONFERENCE

The second national conference of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency will take place on the weekend of May 25-27 in New York City. Delegates from F.I.T. Local Organizing Committees around the country will convene to discuss the orientation of the tendency in light of events since October 1984, when the first conference of the F.I.T. took place in Minneapolis. These include the SWP's pre-world congress convention in January, the world congress of the Fourth International in February, significant developments around the April 20 demonstration and other Central American solidarity activities, the continued experience of building the F.I.T., and the further evolution of other groups of expelled or ex-SWP members--Socialist Action and North Star Network.

The F.I.T. was founded in February 1984 after the SWP leadership had conducted a sweeping purge of all remaining party members whom they knew, or suspected, were opposed to the leadership's programmatic changes. The initial platform of the tendency, which was adopted a short time later, recognized that the SWP remained the revolutionary party in the United States. It called on those who had been expelled to undertake the task of trying to reorient the party--in particular the ranks of the party--and bring about a reversal of the disastrous course set by the party leadership.

The October 1984 conference reaffirmed this perspective. It recognized that the SWP had gone through a continuing evolution since the time of the expulsions, but assessed the results of that evolution as contradictory. There was no coherent or organized opposition in the party among those who remained members. The leadership continued to progressively abandon the program of the Fourth International. There were, however, still some who understood the theoretical issues, and there also appeared to be a degree of general dissatisfaction, most significantly with the growing abstentionist approach to the mass movements--in particular the antiwar/anti-U.S. intervention in Central America movement.

The conference maintained the orientation of the Fourth Internationalist

Tendency as a group whose primary objective is the reform of the SWP--to win the party membership back to a revolutionary Marxist perspective. In addition, it recognized that the growing development of anti-intervention sentiment, and especially the results of the Cleveland Emergency Conference which had taken place a few weeks before, were of primary importance both because of the objective significance of this movement and because of the impact that it could possibly have on the SWP.

The conference also recognized the necessity for the F.I.T. to reassess its basic approach at relatively frequent intervals. The process which the SWP is going through cannot remain stagnant. The situation we face is constantly changing, as the party tries to deal with the contradictions in its new approach--both those which affect the U.S. class struggle and those relating to world events. The May conference of the F.I.T. will decide if any change or alteration in the tendency's current approach is needed.

SPECIAL OFFER

Bulletin in Defense of Marxism

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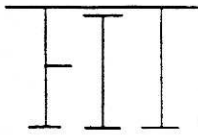
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LETTER TO SWP



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

February 21, 1985

SWP Political Committee

Dear Comrades,

The recently concluded world congress upheld the appeal of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency and other expelled members of the Socialist Workers Party. One of the motions adopted by the delegates states that "the World Congress demands the collective reintegration of all the present members of SA and FIT who were expelled from the SWP into SWP membership" (emphasis in original).

We expect to be informed what effort you plan to make to comply with this demand.

As an immediate interim measure we believe the following steps are in order: 1) End the prohibition on expelled members attending public SWP functions, such as forums and campaign rallies, and end your refusal to answer--or even acknowledge--our correspondence. 2) Establish coordination with F.I.T. and S.A. regarding the April 20 demonstration, which all three of our organizations have endorsed and which we are working actively to build. 3) Establish election campaign committees which will allow for the collaboration of expelled members in those cities where the SWP is running local candidates.

Comradely,

Steve Bloom
National
Administrative
Secretary

IS THE SWP MAKING A TURN AWAY FROM ABSTENTIONISM?

by David Williams

Last month we reported that the Socialist Workers Party had changed its attitude to the existing antiwar movement and had decided to support and participate in the April 20 demonstrations in Washington, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Seattle.

We welcomed their decision, made in late December, and expressed the hope that it was a first step toward abandonment of the abstentionist policies that have done so much damage in recent years to the SWP's work in the labor, women's, Black, Hispanic, student and other progressive movements.

We hoped that a return to the actual antiwar movement would encourage similar corrections in the other areas. But we could not be certain that this would happen, and watched carefully for signs that would tell us if the switch on antiwar work was an exception to the abstentionism of recent years or the beginning of a generalized change (or "turn") that would affect all of the SWP's activity.

So far, the main evidence for an answer to this question comes from the political resolution adopted at the SWP's special pre-world congress convention in January, two weeks after the antiwar shift. It is not encouraging.

The background of the January political resolution is this: Last August the SWP had its 32nd national convention. The Political Committee submitted a political resolution to this convention, but did it so late (mid-July) that the members were unable to discuss it before the convention. The delegates adopted the July resolution, but it was also decided to permit further discussion and possible amendment before it was published. This is the document, edited and amended, that was re-adopted by the January convention and is now published, under the title "The Revolutionary Perspective and Leninist Continuity in the United States," in the Spring 1985 issue of New Internationalist.

The July resolution, as we showed in several Bulletin IDOM articles, was a codification of the SWP's turn to dogmatic abstention from the living class struggle. It reflected the disorientation of a leadership which had concluded that building a revolutionary workers' party was not possible until the working class had suffered more defeats, that a

real antiwar movement could not be built in this country until U.S. ground troops began dying in Central America, that the struggles which did exist had defects and shortcomings that precluded the participation of the SWP.

Actually, the SWP leadership's negative projections have been just as far from reality as the overoptimistic ones that had previously characterized their outlook. They have led several hundred dedicated activists away from the living class struggle, toward a romanticized version of Latin American revolution.

If the shift in antiwar policy in December represented the start of a general turn away from abstentionism, we could expect this to be reflected in the amended political resolution adopted at the January convention. Unfortunately, it is not reflected there.

The changes in wording, on the whole, are just that--changes in wording only--and in no way reflect a change in political line. This resolution contains very little in the way of specific action projections for the immediate period, in either the July or January versions. All of the glaring errors of the July text are printed for the world to see in the NI. In many cases, where the July version said "workers," the January version says "workers and farmers." That is as much as this resolution adds to our understanding of the agricultural producers and their relationship to the working class.

The SWP's positive step with respect to April 20 does find expression in the January version. April 20 itself is not mentioned, but antiwar demonstrations which are organized outside the framework of the trade unions are treated affirmatively.

The July version said: "...tactical cleavages within the ruling-class parties occur that can provide an opening to help mobilize opposition in the streets to imperialist war moves. Actions aimed at advancing toward the mobilization of the working class and its allies in the fight against Washington's course toward war in Central America and the Caribbean can help bring this decisive social force into the scales against this bipartisan war policy."

The January version says: "...tactical cleavages in the ruling-class parties help increase opportunities to

mobilize opposition in the streets to imperialist war moves. Antiwar demonstrations, which in their large majority will be initiated by groups and coalitions outside the unions, will play an increasingly vital and irreplaceable role in advancing the fight against Washington's bipartisan war policy in Central America and the Caribbean. Such street actions are objectively anti-imperialist. They provide the opportunity for all opponents of the war to help bring the working class and oppressed nationalities into the leadership of the battle to defend the right of the Central American and Caribbean people to determine their own future, free from domination by the United States rulers."

The January version is clearly better. A significant change is the recognition that most antiwar demonstrations today will be initiated by groups and coalitions outside the unions.

Another key sentence here is, "Such street actions are objectively anti-imperialist." It may be true that the majority of antiwar demonstrators at present have illusions in liberal Democrats. Most of them probably support the "mutual and verifiable nuclear freeze." In fact, a great many, if not most, are not even supporters of the Cuban revolution.

However, those are not reasons for the revolutionary party not to participate in antiwar demonstrations; in fact, they make it more urgent that the party does participate. Its ideas will be taken more seriously if it is marching together with the people it is trying to convince, rather than criticizing from the sidelines. Of course, that is secondary to striking a united blow against Washington's war drive against the Central American and Caribbean workers and peasants.

Despite the improvement in the January text's attitude to antiwar demonstrations, it does not go far enough. It seriously underestimates the role that trade unionists are already playing in the anti-intervention movement. It also seriously underestimates the degree to which workers have the same illusions that other antiwar activists have about liberal Democrats, the "freeze," etc.

Rank and file unionists, officials and union staff people played an absolutely essential role in organizing last September's Emergency National Conference in Cleveland. Many states have labor committees against U.S. intervention, and they are actively building the April 20 demonstrations. However, most of those unionists who are helping strike a real blow against U.S. imperialism share many of the wrong ideas

opposed by the SWP (and by the F.I.T.).

At the Cleveland conference, for example, Dave Dyson, director of the union label department of the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers and secretary of the National Labor Committee in Support of Democracy and Human Rights in El Salvador, urged conference participants to vote for Mondale.

Al Lannon, an International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union official, speaking of refugees from Central America, said there were as many Salvadorans fleeing from the terror of the Left as of the Right, and that a great many refugees are Nicaraguans trying to escape the military draft. Whether or not such statements are accurate is of course beside the point. The point is that he, like many workers, is not involved in the anti-intervention movement because of political solidarity with the Salvadoran or Nicaraguan revolutions. That does not lessen the importance of his or anyone's participation in the struggle.

The January resolution does not even partially correct the leadership's errors in other areas of the class struggle. The confused and disorienting discussion of the fight for a labor party in the U.S. is virtually unchanged in the published text.

The lack of participation by the party ranks in the pre-convention discussion is an ominous sign (see Bulletin IDOM No. 14). It is clear that the anti-democratic expulsions carried out by the Barnes leadership have had a chilling effect; any statement of differences with the leadership now requires a good deal of courage, and few will oppose the leadership without a clearly thought-out alternative program. Those who know that something is wrong but are not sure exactly what it is or how to fix it are keeping quiet. Others feel a little more self-confident because of the switch on the antiwar movement, which they wanted.

The recent world congress of the FI struck a significant blow against Barnes' anti-democratic norms when it demanded the reintegration into the SWP of the members of the F.I.T. and Socialist Action and Eileen Gersh. One result may be to encourage SWP members to speak up without fear of organizational reprisal, thus leading to real debate on the SWP's course of action. Whatever the leadership decides to do about the world congress demand, we must continue the fight to correct the party's mistakes until its theoretical journal has an entirely new political resolution to publish for its readers.

March 9, 1985

PERMANENT REVOLUTION AND BLACK LIBERATION IN THE U.S.

by Larry Stewart

Jack Barnes and his group in the SWP leadership decided, before the party's August 1981 convention, that the SWP should junk the theory of permanent revolution and other aspects of the traditional Trotskyist program that are repugnant to Fidel Castro and the current he represents. But instead of saying this openly at the convention and letting the delegates decide what to do about it, the Barnes group denied that they had any intention of changing the party's position on permanent revolution, and waited until two days after the convention before taking the first open steps to disassociate themselves from Trotskyism and principal parts of the SWP program.

This was done in a one-step-at-a-time fashion during the next 17 months, partly in the party's public press and partly through an internal re-education program centered around carefully selected writings of Lenin. When some party members asked for an internal literary discussion to discuss changes of such magnitude before they were made publicly, they were assailed as disrupters, factionalists, and petty-bourgeois capitulators to the pressures of capitalism, and they were warned they would be expelled if they tried to organize any unauthorized discussion.

But finally, on Dec. 31, 1982, in a speech at a YSA convention in Chicago, Jack Barnes dropped the other shoe with a public declaration that the theory of permanent revolution must be "discarded."

When opponents of this position protested such a public change without approval by any SWP convention, or even any discussion by the membership, they were told they would be able to discuss the Barnes speech during the next pre-convention discussion period (then slated for the summer of 1983) and that

they were prohibited from discussing it before then. But the Barnes group postponed the convention until August 1984, and in the meantime used phony charges to expel each and every member who they thought might object in the pre-convention discussion to the rejection of permanent revolution.

In this way the members of the SWP were deprived of their democratic right to hear a two-sided discussion of the correctness or incorrectness of the program and policies that have guided the SWP and FI since they were founded in 1938. And that is why I and other advocates of permanent revolution never had a chance inside the SWP to explain what we thought was wrong and dangerous in the Barnes position (printed in the Fall 1983 New International under the title "Their Trotsky and Ours: Communist Continuity Today").

Other expelled members and some members of the FI outside of the U.S. have written effective replies to Barnes. It is not my intention here to repeat their arguments, which the Barnes group has never bothered to answer. All I want to raise are some questions about a single aspect of the new position which I haven't seen discussed by others and which I would have raised inside the SWP if I hadn't been expelled.

WHAT BARNES CLAIMS

To buttress his position that our movement must "discard" the theory or strategy of permanent revolution, Barnes painted a very negative picture of the effects it has had on our movement since 1928.

"Especially in relation to the class struggle in the oppressed nations," and "especially in this hemisphere since 1959," he said in the NI article, the weaknesses in Trotsky's theory have opened the door to "leftist biases and sectarian political errors." He doesn't prove that such errors result from adherence to permanent revolution, he only asserts that they do. For more than a century all kinds of stupid and criminal things have been done by people who call themselves and consider them-

Larry Stewart was still working on this article when he died in November 1984. His notes have been edited by George Breitman, with whom he collaborated throughout his 45 years of activity in the Marxist, Black, and labor movements.

selves to be Marxists. Barnes wouldn't propose discarding Marxism on that basis, so how can he pretend it is valid to discard permanent revolution merely because errors or sins are committed by people who think or say they stand for that strategy?

Permanent revolution, Barnes continued, has nothing to offer us and in fact can only be an "obstacle." It "does not contribute today to arming either ourselves or other revolutionists to lead the working class and its allies to take power and use that power to advance the world socialist revolution." It is an obstacle to "reknitting our political continuity with Marx, Engels, Lenin, and the first four congresses of the Communist International." It has been an obstacle in our movement to "an objective reading of the masters of Marxism, in particular the writings of Lenin." It will be an obstacle to "our own progress toward a deeper integration into the organizations and struggles of the working class and its oppressed and exploited allies."

If these claims are true, or even only half-true, why did it take Barnes and his group more than 20 years to discover them? Can it be that he is distorting not only the real meaning of permanent revolution but also its effects on our movement?

BENEFICIAL EFFECTS

It certainly can. As most SWP members in the 1960s could testify, permanent revolution has had highly beneficial effects on the SWP and was a major source of its strength and attractiveness in the 1960s, when Barnes was recruited. The two issues that won most of the new members to the SWP at that time -- the Cuban revolution and the Black struggle in this country -- were both linked inextricably to the strategy of permanent revolution, in reality and in the minds of SWP members, new and old.

Contrary to Barnes' implications (about "this hemisphere" and "since 1959"), the SWP played a thoroughly revolutionary role in relation to the Cuban revolution, in its practice as well as in its theory. In fact, it was this combination of the SWP's correct practice and correct theory regarding the Cuban revolution that drew Barnes and others like him to Marxism in the first place.

Until a few years ago nobody in the SWP questioned the link between permanent revolution and the SWP's position on Cuba. As recently as 1978, Barnes took the initiative in collecting Joseph

Hansen's writings on Cuba in book form as Dynamics of the Cuban Revolution. From start to finish that book is an exposition and defense of Trotsky's theory, which Hansen held had been fully confirmed by the Cuban experience. It is a book that cries out against the new positions of the Barnes group since 1979, when Hansen died. Whatever "weaknesses" they now profess to see in permanent revolution, the SWP's record on Cuba is evidence of the healthy and fruitful effects it had for decades in "arming . . . revolutionists to lead the working class and its allies to take power."

ITS PLACE IN OUR MOVEMENT

Barnes pretends to review the ways in which permanent revolution "has actually been used by us" since 1928; he even specifies the number of ways (three). One of these ways he pronounces harmless, but unnecessary, and the other two he condemns as harmful. Despite his attempt to seem objective, what the uninformed reader will "actually" get from this is a misleading concept of the place and centrality of permanent revolution in the life and thought of our movement. I will try to demonstrate this through the SWP's relation to the Black struggle in the U.S. I am compelled to do this because Barnes completely ignores the connection between the SWP's position on Black liberation and permanent revolution -- a connection that happens to be a major hallmark of the SWP since its foundation.

The Black struggle presents a challenge and test for every organization seeking to play a revolutionary role in this country. The way in which the SWP responded was always a source of pride and inspiration to its members, white as well as Black. Barnes and most of his generation in the SWP acknowledged and reflected these feelings hundreds of times in the 1960s and 70s. A thick book could be filled with their statements and writings on the SWP's special and unique understanding of the Black struggle and its dynamics.

As a matter of fact, the SWP's position was so exceptional that it was given a special name: "combined revolution" (or "combined character" of the coming American revolution). This name was coined in 1969, in preparation for the SWP's 23rd national convention, where Barnes and members of his generation first assumed political leadership status in our party.

"Combined revolution" was not a new concept in the SWP in the 1960s. It

referred to the combination of the Black struggle against racist oppression and for self-determination with the workers' struggle against capitalist exploitation and for socialism, and said that this combination was indispensable for the victory of both these struggles. This idea was adopted at the SWP's 1963 convention (in the resolution called "Freedom Now"). What it got at the 1969 convention was a new and more effective expression, thanks to the development of Black nationalism and the rich experience of the entire decade.

But the lineage or continuity of the combined revolution idea goes back further than 1963. It goes back to the 1930s and Leon Trotsky, who introduced it to our movement at a time when we had a correct understanding of the class character of the Black struggle but an incorrect understanding of its national character. And the name used then for the idea of combining the democratic struggles of the Blacks with the anti-capitalist struggles of the workers was -- permanent revolution.

The first one who seems to have said that Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution was applicable to the Black struggle in this country was Albert Weisbord, an ex-CP member briefly on the fringes of the Left Opposition. When Trotsky was told about this at a discussion on self-determination in 1933, he said, "Weisbord is correct in a certain sense that the self-determination of the Negroes belongs to the question of the permanent revolution in America." (Leon Trotsky on Black Nationalism and Self-Determination, Pathfinder Press, 1978, p. 25)

Trotsky reiterated this thought in 1939 during a discussion with members of the newly founded SWP, and the party itself, in a 1939 convention resolution influenced by Trotsky's views, said: "The SWP must recognize that its attitude to the Negro question is crucial for its future development. Hitherto the party has been based mainly on privileged workers and groups of isolated intellectuals. Unless it can find its way to the great masses of the underprivileged, of whom the Negroes constitute so important a section, the broad perspectives of the permanent revolution will remain only a fiction and the party is bound to degenerate." (The Founding of the Socialist Workers Party, Monad Press, 1982, p. 357)

If combined revolution is permanent revolution applied to a particular problem, was a new name really needed? Why not continue to call it by its original name? My personal opinion is that the

new name was better than the old -- it made it easier for us to communicate the idea to people we wanted to introduce it to. Also, every generation has the right to its own terminology and vocabulary. When I was young, we used to speak of "Negroes" and "colored people," but later generations prefer other names. If young revolutionaries in the 1960s and 70s felt more comfortable with their own name for the revolutionary strategy based on the necessity to combine democratic and socialist tasks and struggles, there was nothing wrong with that. The important thing was the political content behind the names, which was essentially the same in both cases.

This is not just my opinion, it was the opinion of the whole party. The main political resolution adopted by the 1969 convention contained an excellent presentation of the combined revolution concept. I will quote a few passages from it to illustrate how its content and language were interchangeable with those used in our writings about permanent revolution:

INTERCHANGEABLE CONTENT

"The movement for Black liberation is a complex and contradictory fusion of two explosive trends. One is an irrepressible and powerful democratic thrust for self-determination as a distinctive national minority. This is combined with a proletarian struggle against the capitalist rulers. All those who fail to understand the dual character of the Afro-American movement and combined characteristics of the coming American revolution are bound to go astray in comprehending its development and orienting correctly toward it.

"The problem of winning full democratic rights and national emancipation for Black Americans is a task that was unsolved by the American bourgeois revolutionists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and has been handed down for solution to the socialist revolution of the twentieth century....

"The Afro-American struggle for liberation is the most formidable expression of the logic of permanent revolution in American life today. It has begun on the basis of a fight for national emancipation. But this democratic objective cannot be obtained except through all-out combat against the entire capitalist system, which holds down the Black masses for its own profiteering reasons. Thus, regardless of the prevailing ideas of its participants, the thrust toward national liberation inexorably tends to merge with the

broader class struggle against capitalist domination....

"The combined character of the mass Afro-American movement to gain power to have control over their own future precludes any separation of stages in the struggle for its nationalist demands and socialist objectives. There cannot first be a successfully concluded struggle for national independence and democratic rights and afterwards a struggle for social liberation. The two must be indissolubly combined and will, in fact, reciprocally reinforce each other. The nationalist demands must be tied in with working-class demands in order to obtain either." (Towards an American Socialist Revolution, Pathfinder Press, 1970, pp. 164-6) [My emphasis -- L.S.]

WHAT BARNES SAID IN 1969

At that 1969 convention Jack Barnes was the Political Committee reporter in behalf of the political resolution, and he did a good job in presenting its main lines, especially on the Black struggle. Among other things, he said:

"The basic characteristic of the Afro-American struggle is the struggle by an oppressed nationality for self-determination: the struggle to accomplish the historically deferred tasks that the American bourgeoisie proved incapable of accomplishing in their second revolution and that they turned away from as the United States became an imperialist power....

"The alliance between the struggle by the Afro-Americans and the other oppressed national minorities or nationalities in this country and the struggle of the workers is the key to the success of the American revolution. . . . It is basically a question not of morality but of necessity. If there is no alliance, the American revolution will be impossible....

"The third American revolution will have a combined character. It will be a workers' struggle for power and a struggle by the oppressed nationalities for liberation and for self-determination. It will be a struggle that only a workers' government established in the United States will be able to bring to a successful conclusion. And through it, not only will all the democratic rights of the oppressed minorities and nationalities finally be brought into being and guaranteed, but also the proletarian demands of the workers of all sections of the country will be met. The problem that has bothered, confused and stood somewhat in the way of American radicalism for many, many years (and outside of

our movement it still does) is clearly seeing the independent character of the Afro-American struggle for self-determination and the combined character of the coming struggle for power in the United States.

"This struggle is the clearest manifestation in the United States of the permanent revolution. By this we mean that there will be no division of this struggle into separate stages; there will be no middle solution. There will be no solution to the national-democratic demands of the Black masses apart from the solution of the exploitation by capitalism of the workers themselves. The revolution will be combined, or it will not take place....

"This key question of the American revolution is one that is hopeless to solve without the tools of Marxism-Leninism-Trotskyism and the experience of the last period as revolutionists." (Idem, pp. 143-5) [My emphasis -- L.S.]

TWO WITNESSES

If I had room, I could cite dozens of other quotations by members and supporters of the Barnes group showing that until recently they considered combined revolution to be an application or manifestation or expression of the logic of permanent revolution and that they consistently interpreted and explained combined revolution along the lines that Trotsky had done with permanent revolution. But I think it will be adequate to submit the testimony of just two people whom I have not quoted up to now.

One is George Novack, who was interested in the Black struggle ever since he joined our party in the 1930s and who participated in the writing or editing of most of the SWP's major resolutions on Black liberation. In 1971 he gave lectures on the transitional program at Oberlin, in the course of which he traced the development of the SWP's assessment of the successive stages of Black nationalism from the 1950s to the 1970s and its theoretical analysis of its motive forces, principal features and aims:

"They [American Trotskyists] were greatly aided in this task by the method of Marxism, the positions worked out by Lenin and the Bolsheviks on the national question in our era, and by the acute provisions of Trotsky contained in the pamphlet Leon Trotsky on Black Nationalism and Self-Determination....

"We can claim a certain amount of success in this theoretical-political work. It is widely recognized in radical circles, black and white, that the So-

cialist Workers Party outstripped all other tendencies in grasping the importance of black nationalism....

"All this indicates the capacity of our cadres to recognize what is new in a mass ferment and adjust our views, strategy, and tactics accordingly. That would not have been possible without the aid of the theory of the permanent revolution and the law of uneven and combined development, taken from Trotsky's teachings." (The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution, Pathfinder Press, 1977, pp. 43-4.) [My emphasis -- L.S.]

The second witness I will cite is Gus Horowitz, who is no longer a member of the SWP. In the late 1960s and 70s he was a leader of the party's educational and publishing work, assigned among other things to promoting understanding and literature about the national question.

Between the 1969 and 1974 world congresses of the FI, sharp factional debates took place in our International over a great many political and theoretical issues. One of these was about the national question and its application in imperialist countries. Ernest Mandel, a leading member of the United Secretariat, said in a criticism of SWP positions in 1973: "The whole notion of applying the formula of permanent revolution to imperialist countries is extremely dubious in the best of cases. It can only be done with the utmost circumspection, and in the form of an analogy." (International Internal Discussion Bulletin, Vol. 10, No. 4, 4/73, p. 34)

The SWP leadership assigned Horowitz to rebut Mandel. I don't know what either Mandel or Horowitz thinks about this question today, but here is what Horowitz said on behalf of the SWP leadership in 1973:

"Circumspection is always desirable, of course, but Comrade [Mandel]

is simply wrong. The permanent revolution can indeed be applied to the advanced capitalist countries, and the Trotskyist movement has been doing so for a long time (particularly in regard to the national question). And a revolutionist in Canada, in Spain, or in Ireland who does not know how to apply it will be in deep trouble....

"Trotsky developed the theory of permanent revolution, an extension of the Marxist understanding of the law of uneven and combined development, in relation to the problems of the Russian revolution. The specific features of that situation were quite different than, say, the problems of the revolution in Black Africa today. But using the method of the permanent revolution, we can apply it there. The problems of the revolution in advanced capitalist countries are much more different, but it remains essential for Marxists to tackle the problems there that stem from uneven and combined development -- for example, the still existing uncompleted national tasks in the framework of an advanced capitalist economy. That is why the revolution in Canada, for example, will most likely be a combined revolution -- combining the Quebecois national independence struggle with the proletarian socialist revolution in Quebec and in all of Canada." (IIDB, Vol. 10, No. 10, 7/73, p. 7) [My emphasis -- L.S.]

ANOTHER CHANGE?

Barnes, as I have noted, alleged that he was reviewing the different ways we have used the concept of permanent revolution since 1928. Why then did he omit all the material showing the numerous links between permanent revolution and the SWP's position on Black liberation in the U.S.?

It wasn't because he was unaware of this material. And it wasn't because he

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

Resolution of the International Executive Committee,
adopted May 1981

Why We Oppose the SWP's New Line on Castroism

by Steve Bloom

75¢ each

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

was ignorant about the weight and centrality of combined revolution in the SWP's total program. So what was the reason?

Thus far, I am unable to offer an answer. But I am very concerned about the Barnes omissions on this point whatever the answer may be. Because it seems to me that they place a question mark over the party's hard-won and precious analysis and program for the Black struggle. Is the Barnes group preparing to change that too?

I am not saying that they are preparing to do so, I am asking -- are they preparing? If raising such a question gives the impression that I am "too suspicious," I must have got that way as a result of recent party history. If anybody had told me five years ago that the SWP leadership would repudiate permanent revolution, and would do it in such a dishonest and undemocratic way, I would have considered the teller a nut of some kind. The Barnes group committed those offenses against proletarian politics and morality without ever announcing in advance what they were up to. That is why my question is in order now, before it may be too late. At the very least, the Barnes group should be watched closely and pressured to disclose their real aims whenever they are ambiguous or diplomatically silent.

The question I ask is not based only on the omissions by Barnes. Even more it is induced by things the SWP leadership has been saying and doing (or not saying and not doing) in relation to the Black struggle itself during the last three or four years. To discuss this adequately will take another article, but I will mention aspects of the problem because it is part of the background to my question about whether the party's position on the Black struggle is being changed without discussion.

It is obvious, first of all, that the Black struggle no longer receives the kind or amount of attention -- politically, theoretically, practically, educationally -- that it used to command in the SWP. It is not the central question it used to be for the party. The level of writing on the subject, which used to be one of our chief assets, is now embarrassingly low. New members get more of agitation than of education in the ideas of combined revolution. They are encouraged to talk to each other rather than trained how to participate effectively in the Black movement.

It has been several years since

party resolutions have made any serious analysis of the Black community and the trends in it or provided any guide to action for our Black cadres. The exception is in relation to the National Black Independent Political Party, a very small group that tried to establish a new political pole in the Black community.

It was correct for us to join NBIPP, explore its potential, and aid in its development toward independent politics. But within a year it was absolutely clear that NBIPP was incapable of playing any serious role in the community, that its leaders were leaning toward the Black Democrats, that they were energetic only about expelling Marxists, and that most of the founding members had quit. NBIPP not only never led a single action among Blacks anywhere in the country, but it was incapable of even producing any literature to educate anybody about politics. Some of its leaders found their way to Jesse Jackson in the Democratic Party, and through Jackson to Mondale. After several years it remains a tiny sect, self-isolated and unknown in the community.

Yet the SWP leadership persists in shutting its eyes to this reality and continues to view this hopeless shell as the center of the Black struggle, devoting more time and attention to it than to all other Black forces and trends. And whenever questions arise about NBIPP's viability, it defends this obtuseness by pointing to, praising and reprinting the radical-sounding sections of the charter that NBIPP adopted when it was founded. Nobody else in NBIPP ever considered the anticapitalist and anti-imperialist paragraphs in the charter as anything but rhetoric, and NBIPP itself never even printed the charter. But the SWP leaders were obsessed by what I can only call "charter fetishism" and invoked it to ward off facing reality.

All this is a sign of acute disorientation on the part of the Barnes group. They could not commit such errors if their thinking about the Black struggle was still firmly rooted in combined revolution. This reinforces, for me, the urgency of my question, and the need for the whole SWP membership to seek an unambiguous answer:

Does the repudiation of permanent revolution signify or imply any alteration in the SWP's theory and practice of combined revolution?

WHEN 'POLITICAL REVOLUTION' REPLACED 'POLITICAL REFORM'

by Chester Hofla

After deciding that "Trotskyism" is an impediment and that their future depends on linking up somehow with the Castro leadership in Cuba, the Barnes "team" in the SWP began to look around for moves that would make them more acceptable to the Castro current.

It seemed to them, after confidential discussions among themselves, that discarding the theory of permanent revolution, long associated with the name of Leon Trotsky, would be a good way to demonstrate their "nonsectarian" (non-Trotskyist) credentials to the Cubans they hope to merge with.

Of course they vehemently denied at the SWP convention in August 1981 that they were contemplating any changes in their attitude to permanent revolution. But by the end of 1982 they couldn't continue this pretense any longer and explicitly repudiated permanent revolution.

That was only the beginning. Many people have noted that revisionists customarily develop their line in a piece-meal fashion. Stage Two has now begun -- rejection of the theory and practice of political revolution in degenerated and deformed workers' states.

This became obvious at the special SWP convention in New York in January and at the world congress of the FI a few weeks later. No SWP resolution was introduced at these gatherings to junk the policy of political revolution.

But at both these meetings the SWP leaders redefined the content of the policy so that it became something else. Instead of political revolution, what they now advocate is reform.

(Not by coincidence, Castro is also opposed to political revolution in the Soviet Union, Poland, and other Stalinized workers' states; he is not opposed to reform.)

Since "political reform" or "political revolution" have always figured in our program for workers' states, it should be useful to review the history and relationship between these concepts in our movement. Here I will try to

summarize the main historical aspects during Trotsky's lifetime.

THE FIRST TEN YEARS

The Left Opposition existed for ten years -- from 1923 to 1933. During that entire period its policy could be summed up in a single word -- reform. Reform of the Communist International; reform of the official Communist parties (even after the Oppositionists had been expelled from them); and reform of the only workers' state then in existence (the USSR).

The emphasis was on the reform of the political institutions (the Comintern and its affiliates) rather than of the state because it was assumed that reform of the former would automatically lead to regeneration of the latter.

The theme of reform was constant all through this decade, although it became more insistent as the Stalinist bureaucracy grew more repressive, and it became more urgent as the Kremlin wrecked the Chinese revolution by its fatally opportunist policy in the mid-1920s, led the Soviet economy to the brink of catastrophe with the forced collectivization of agriculture at the end of the 1920s, and disrupted the international labor movement with the ultraleft "third period" policies that enabled Hitlerite fascism to win power in Germany in 1933 without a real struggle.

The Left Opposition literature of that period is filled with calls for reform of the CPs and the Comintern and explanations of what reform did and did not mean.

These explanations were necessary because the Stalin school of falsification poured out a steady stream of propaganda accusing the Left Opposition of trying to split the Soviet CP in order to create a new party; of working for the restoration of capitalism in the USSR through armed insurrection against the workers' state; etc.

The Left Oppositionists were expelled in 1927; the Right Oppositionists two years later. In 1931 Trotsky gave

the following description of the Soviet regime (in theses on the USSR he wrote for an international conference that had to be postponed):

"[T]he ruling party of the USSR, the leading party of the Comintern, has been completely crushed and replaced by the apparatus. The gigantic difference between the bureaucratism of 1923 and the bureaucratism of 1931 is determined by the complete liquidation of the dependence of the apparatus upon the party that took place in this span of years, as well as by the plebiscitary degeneration of the apparatus itself.

"Not a trace remains of party democracy. Local organizations are selected and autocratically reorganized by secretaries. . . . The local secretaries are appointed by the Central Committee, which is officially and openly converted into a consultative body of the general secretary. Congresses are arbitrarily postponed, delegates are selected from the top....The members of the party are systematically trained in the spirit of passive subordination. Every spark of independence, self-reliance, and firmness, that is, those features which make up the nature of a revolutionist, is crushed, hounded, and trampled under-foot." (Writings, 1930-31, p. 211-2)

But the continuing degeneration did not lead Trotsky to any new conclusions in his 1931 theses. In the chapter entitled "The Road of the Left Opposition in the USSR: The Road of Reform," he wrote:

"WITHOUT NEW REVOLUTION"

"[T]he proletariat of the USSR has not forfeited the possibility of subordinating the bureaucracy to it, of reviving the party again, and of regenerating the regime of the dictatorship -- without a new revolution, with the methods and on the road of reform." (Writings, 1930-31, p. 225)

Two years later, early in 1933, the Oppositionists did succeed in holding an international conference, for which Trotsky in December 1932 wrote the main resolution, called "The International Left Opposition, Its Tasks and Methods." In the chapter entitled "Faction and Not Party," he wrote:

"The International Left Opposition regards itself as a faction of the Comintern and its separate national sections as factions of the national Communist parties....[I]ts aim is to tear the banner of Bolshevism out of the hands of the usurping bureaucracy and return the Communist International to the principles of Marx and Lenin....

"Such a historical catastrophe as the collapse of the Soviet state would, of course, sweep away with it the Third International too. Similarly, the victory of fascism in Germany and the smashing of the German proletariat would hardly allow the Comintern to survive the consequences of its disastrous policies. But who in the camp of the revolution will today dare to say that the collapse of the Soviet power or the victory of fascism in Germany cannot be avoided or prevented? Not the Left Opposition, in any event....

"The entire responsibility for the splitting of communism lies on the Stalinist bureaucracy. The Bolshevik-Leninists are prepared, at a moment, to return to the ranks of the Comintern and to observe strict discipline in action, while at the same time, on the basis of party democracy..., [we subject the Stalinist bureaucracy] to irreconcilable criticism. But the aim of this criticism is not to set up competitive parties against the existing Communist parties, but to win over the proletarian nucleus of the official parties and in this way to rebuild the parties on a Marxist foundation.

"This question is put more clearly and more sharply in the USSR than anywhere else. The policy of a second party there would mean a policy of armed insurrection and a new revolution. The policy of the faction means steering a course toward internal reform of the party and the workers' state. Despite all the slanders of the Stalinist bureaucracy and its admirers, the Opposition remains solely and completely on the ground of reform." (Writings, 1932-33, pp. 54-5)

This was written only a few weeks before Hitler came to power in Germany, and demonstrates that up until that point our movement continued to link reform of the party and state with its own status as a faction of the party. Stated otherwise, this signified that changing its status as a faction and becoming a new (or second) party would imply a policy of "armed insurrection and a new revolution."

MOMENTOUS DECISIONS

Hitler's victory in Germany was the biggest setback to the world working class since the Second International's capitulation to the warmakers in 1914. The German CP collapsed, and the Comintern endorsed the fatal policy that had put the Nazis in power. As the full dimensions of this defeat sank in, the Left Opposition was compelled to recon-

sider the policy of reform. This led to the most momentous decisions in the history of our movement, before or since.

In a nutshell, we decided that the Comintern and its affiliates could no longer be considered revolutionary organizations capable of being reformed along Leninist lines, and that it was necessary to build a new International and new revolutionary parties. We stopped thinking and acting like a faction of the Comintern, and have been working ever since 1933 to create and strengthen the Fourth International and its national parties and nuclei. It is very hard to imagine what would have happened to our movement if it had not taken this radical step at that time; it would have been a very different organization if it had indefinitely continued the pre-1933 policy of Comintern faction and advocate of reform.

But the renunciation of the reform perspective did not apply to the problem of reforming the Soviet state; when it was adopted in the summer of 1933 it was restricted to the Comintern and the CPs. The question of reforming the Soviet state was not taken up or acted on in the initial discussions or decisions.

Trotsky spent a good deal of time thinking about the reform-of-the-Soviet-state issue at that time, but he did not write anything on it for the movement until a couple of months after the call for a new International had been approved. Then he did it in a pamphlet called "The Class Nature of the Soviet State," dated Oct. 1, 1933.

FORMULATIONS IN 1933

Reading or rereading that 1933 pamphlet is still a rewarding educational experience half a century later. It effectively demonstrated the proletarian character of the Soviet state despite its bureaucratic degeneration, explained the need for a new Soviet party, and refuted various Social Democratic and ultraleft theories such as "state capitalism." But it is probably best remembered because it posed the question of whether it was possible with peaceful methods to remove the bureaucracy that monopolized power and all avenues to power.

Always sensitive to the way the Stalinists distorted everything the Opposition said, Trotsky tried to anticipate what they would say about this new statement and to clarify it in advance as much as possible:

"[T]his task can be solved only by a revolutionary party. The fundamental

historic task is to create the revolutionary party in the USSR from among the healthy elements of the old party and from among the youth. Later we shall deal with the conditions under which it can be solved.

"Let us assume, however, that such a party is already in existence. Through what ways could it assume power? As early as 1927 Stalin said, addressing the Opposition, 'The present bureaucracy can be eliminated only through civil war.' This challenge, Bonapartist in spirit, was addressed not to the Left Opposition but to the party....The subsequent course of events has added great weight to this challenge.

"After the experiences of the last few years, it would be childish to suppose that the Stalinist bureaucracy can be removed by means of a party or soviet congress....No normal 'constitutional' ways remain to remove the ruling clique. The bureaucracy can be compelled to yield power into the hands of the proletarian vanguard only by force.

"All the hacks will immediately howl in chorus: The 'Trotskyites,' like Kautsky, are preaching an armed insurrection against the dictatorship of the proletariat. But let us pass on. The question of seizing power will arise as a practical question for the new party only when it will have consolidated around itself the majority of the working class.

"In the course of such a radical change in the relation of forces, the bureaucracy would become more and more isolated, more and more split. As we know, the social roots of the bureaucracy lie in the proletariat, if not in its active support, then, at any rate, in its 'toleration.' When the proletariat springs into action, the Stalinist apparatus will remain suspended in midair.

"Should it still attempt to resist, it will then be necessary to apply against it not the measures of civil war but rather the measures of a police character. In any case, what will be involved is not an armed insurrection against the dictatorship of the proletariat but the removal of a malignant growth upon it." (Writings, 1933-34, pp. 117-8)

TWO POINTS OF VIEW

Trotsky had raised several thorny problems in this pamphlet, but some of his answers were not clear to everyone. For example, it was obviously true that he was not advocating an armed insurrection against the dictatorship of the proletariat -- but was he advocating an

insurrection against the bureaucracy? If so, it wasn't stated plainly, in his usual unambiguous way. The term revolution, however qualified, was not used here at all.

Partly as a result of this, there have been two points of view in our movement about whether or not the concept of political revolution in degenerated workers' states was first enunciated in this pamphlet.

Jean van Heijenoort, a secretary of Trotsky in the 1930s, said in 1942 that the position taken in the pamphlet was "in the main" the one maintained by the FI "to the present." ("How the Fourth International Was Conceived," reprinted in Leon Trotsky, the Man and His Work, Merit Publishers, 1969, p. 63)

Similarly, Pierre Broue, editor of the multi-volume Trotsky series in French, stated in 1980 that "The Class Nature of the Soviet State" contained an exposition of "political revolution" even though that term was never used in the pamphlet. (Oeuvres, vol. 8, EDI, 1980, p. 31)

On the other hand, when James P. Cannon reviewed the 1933 pamphlet 20 years later, he said that the "force" advocated by Trotsky at that time "would not take the form of revolution." He was careful to add that Trotsky later concluded "it was already too late for mere 'police measures.'" ("Trotsky or Deutscher?" Fourth International, Winter 1954, p. 12)

I am devoting more space to Trotsky's formulations in 1933 than those before or after because their incomplete and transitory character lend themselves to misunderstanding or abuse.

That happened, for example, in 1953, after Stalin's death, when many people, including some in or around the FI, were swept off their feet by hopes and illusions that Stalin's successors would democratize the USSR through a process of self-reform. Trotsky's 1933 statements, torn out of context, were badly misused to support the notion that he "really" always was for reform, despite his later disclaimers.

I detect similar tones in some current statements by people in the FI who want to de-revolutionize the concept of political revolution. So let us continue, now with Trotsky's post-1933 positions.

PLAINLY STATED IN 1936

At the end of 1935 a Czech intellectual solicited Trotsky's views about possible transformations of Soviet society and the state. Trotsky's reply,

dated Jan. 1, 1936, is relevant here as probably his initial use of the term "political revolution":

"What perspective opens before us? Very probably a new revolution. This will not be a social revolution, but a political revolution. In its evolution the bourgeoisie too has known of 'great' revolutions, i.e., social revolutions, and purely political revolutions which took place on the basis of already established property. The theoretical prognoses of Marx and Lenin did not foresee, in any case, the possibility of political revolutions on the basis of property nationalized by the proletariat. But they did not foresee the Bonapartist degeneration of the proletarian dictatorship, either. Both these things belong to those stages, transitory forms, etc., in the formation of which history is so rich. The general laws of the evolution of capitalism to socialism, as they are established by Marxism, do not lose their force by virtue of these 'episodes' (very disagreeable 'episodes')." (Writings, 1935-36, p. 224)

In August 1936 Trotsky completed his book The Revolution Betrayed. In its last section, "The Inevitability of a New Revolution," he developed his analysis of political revolution in many of its ramifications and presented his program for the restoration of Soviet democracy. Here we cite only the passages that express his unambiguous conclusion that the political revolution in the USSR would be "an insurrection of the workers against the bureaucracy":

"All indications agree that the further course of development must inevitably lead to a clash between the culturally developed forces of the people and the bureaucratic oligarchy. There is no peaceful outcome for this crisis. No devil ever yet voluntarily cut off his own claws. The Soviet bureaucracy will not give up its positions without a fight. The development leads obviously to the road of revolution....

"[T]he bureaucracy can be removed only by a revolutionary force....To prepare this and stand at the head of the masses in a favorable historic situation -- that is the task of the Soviet section of the Fourth International." (pp. 287-8)

In July 1936, a few days before Trotsky finished writing The Revolution Betrayed, the ICL organized the First International Conference for the Fourth International. For this conference Trotsky wrote a resolution, "The Fourth International and the Soviet Union," which was adopted by the delegates. It

was our movement's first official statement on political revolution. Thesis 15 of the resolution said:

"The working class of the USSR has been robbed of the last possibility of a legal reformation of the state. The struggle against the bureaucracy necessarily becomes a revolutionary struggle. True to the traditions of Marxism, the Fourth International decisively rejects individual terror, as it does all other means of political adventurism. The bureaucracy can be smashed only by means of the goal-conscious movement of the masses against the usurpers, parasites, and oppressors.

"If a social counterrevolution -- i.e., the overthrow of state ownership of the means of production and of the land as well as the reestablishment of private property -- is necessary for the return of the USSR to capitalism, then for the further development of socialism a political revolution has become inevitable, i.e., the violent overthrow of the political rule of the degenerated bureaucracy while maintaining the property relations established by the October Revolution. The proletarian vanguard of the USSR, basing itself upon the toiling masses of the whole country and upon the revolutionary movement of the whole world, will have to batter down the bureaucracy by force, restore Soviet democracy, eliminate the enormous privileges, and assure a genuine advance to socialist equality." (Writings, 1935-36, p. 358-9)

The resolution could not have been more clear-cut on the points that interest us here. The proletarian vanguard (not administrative or police forces) has to batter down the bureaucracy by force in order to violently overthrow its political rule (not curb it through reforms or other peaceful means).

The same analysis and the same conclusions were continued by Trotsky in 1938 when he wrote the Transitional Program for the international conference that founded the Fourth International in September.

While recognizing the possibility of a united front "with the Thermidorian [Stalinist] section of the bureaucracy against open attack by capitalist counterrevolution," Trotsky stressed that "the chief political task in the USSR still remains the overthrow of this same Thermidorian bureaucracy." (The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution, Pathfinder Press, 1977, p. 145)

During the discussion preceding the founding conference, Joseph Carter of the SWP opposed the slogan "It is necessary to drive the bureaucracy and aristocracy out of the soviets," which Trotsky had included in the Transitional Program.

In the course of his reply to Carter's various objections, Trotsky reviewed the evolution of our positions on political reform and revolution:

"It is, moreover, untrue, that the slogan represents something new in the ranks of the Fourth International. Possibly the formulation is new, but not the content. For a long time we held to the point of view of reforming the Soviet regime...This stage could not be skipped. But the further course of events at any rate disproved the perspective of a peaceful transformation of the party and the soviets. From the position of reform we passed to the position of revolution, that is, of a violent overthrow of the bureaucracy." (The Transitional Program, p. 185)

CONCLUSIONS

1. From 1923 to 1933 our movement traveled the road of reform for the degenerated workers' state.

2. In 1933 we recognized that the Stalinist bureaucracy would not give up power peacefully and would have to be removed by force.

3. But we did not immediately enter the road of revolution, and we did not advocate a workers' insurrection against the bureaucracy until 1936. Trotsky's 1933 formulations reflected the beginning of a transition to a new position, but it took more time before the new position could be rounded out, absorbed, and adopted.

4. Our positions before 1933 and after 1936 are crystal clear. Political revolution -- organizing the masses to overthrow the bureaucracy -- is a hallmark of the FI and has been a central part of our program since 1936.

5. Let those in the FI who want to junk the policy of political revolution to overthrow the bureaucracy stop hinting or pretending that they are acting in the tradition of Trotsky or the other founders of the FI. Absolutely nothing in that tradition justifies replacing the policy of political revolution with a policy of "democratizing," "regenerating," or "reforming" bureaucratized workers' states.

WOMEN, TECHNOLOGY, AND THE CHANGING WORKFORCE

by Laura Cole

Last December I wrote an article (printed in Bulletin No. 14) calling attention to the Socialist Workers Party's downgrading of women's revolutionary potential as reflected in two political resolutions issued since 1979. The 1984 resolution is now available to the public (New International, Spring 1985) and while the proposed section on women -- entitled "'Gender gap' myth" -- has been amended to include a paragraph asserting the SWP's continued support to women's struggles against oppression, the tone remains one of disparagement and pessimism. Nowhere is there any mention of the need for an independent women's movement, although verbal support is given to organizations such as NOW and CLUW. I say "verbal support" because it has been some time since a women's fraction from the SWP has intervened, or regularly participated, in the struggles of the movement.

Doug Jenness, in his article "Forging a Fighting Worker-Farmer Alliance" printed in the same issue of NI, briefly discusses some of the characteristics of farmers which make them susceptible to illusions and solutions fostered by capitalist and even right-wing organizations (pp. 114-5). And on page 141, Jack Barnes, in his article "The Workers' and Farmers' Government," comments that "farmers are . . . even more susceptible than many workers to certain types of utopian nostrums and radical right-wing crank ideas." These descriptions are remarkably similar to the dire analysis projected onto women in the 1984 political resolution (pp. 69-71). But whereas two pages are given over to a discussion of the passive, isolated, family centered, and unproletarian position of women which makes "a higher percentage" of them compared to men "susceptible to reactionary 'solutions' and right-wing demagogy," over half the issue of NI revolves around the social weight and revolutionary potential of farmers. Why is this?

The farm crisis today is instructive, but the questions raised by it are not being dealt with by the SWP. There is no real question of the value of

farmers or their product. We do not need to belabor the importance of a worker-farmer alliance. The question that should be addressed is: What has happened that the capitalists no longer seem to need an alliance with farmers? Why has the Reagan administration, which represents a major current of bourgeois thought (and one whose main support comes traditionally and presumably from this "heartland" area), chosen to abandon the family farm? Among other things farmers and farm communities have long been a bulwark of conservative political policies. The family farm has been a mainstay of good old American, god-fearing, paternalistic, "pro-life" family values. How come these politicians seem no longer to care about its social weight? The New York Times commented (12/30/84) on this decline in influence in a discussion of farmers' unhappiness over U.S. political decisions which affected wheat sales, "Farmers still rail at the action against the Russians and its after-effects, but it is hard for them to be heard today. Their support in Congress has diminished with the decline of the number of farms."

A CAPITAL-INTENSIVE INDUSTRY

In the past 100 years United States agriculture has become industrialized -- to the point of being one of the most capital-intensive industries in the world. In 1830 70.5 percent of the labor force in the U.S. was involved in farm occupations which produced 100 percent of our food. Today 3 percent of the work force produces 120 percent of the food we need and has the potential to produce even more. [Jenness says (p. 101) 3 percent of the population, but the ratio of farmers to total population (3,315,000/178,483,000 or 2 percent) is even smaller than that of their ratio within the labor force (3,315,000/115,419,000 or 3 percent) -- U.S. Labor Department statistics.] More importantly, however, what has happened on the family farm is an indication of what is at work today in other sections of American industry.

The New York Times (7/15/84) says that "in 1980, 22 percent of the labor force in the United States worked in manufacturing. By the year 2000, this figure will be between 5 and 10 percent."

We are in the middle of a technological revolution whose closest counterpart goes back to the industrial revolution in England which went hand in hand with land enclosures. A restudy of that period in economic history would reveal many interesting contemporary parallels, including the extent to which female labor was integrated into all areas of the work force. These parallels should be of concern to Marxists, and certainly should be remarked upon by the SWP. The Militant is a newspaper published "in the interests of the working people." And working people are concerned about what they see, feel, know in their bones is happening to their world; they are looking for answers. Yet the articles in the Militant which discuss problems facing today's workers do not focus any attention on these technological changes which are reshaping today's work force.

At the time of the auto industry contract showdown last August, the Militant ran a cover story on "The Stakes for Labor." There was also a three page spread on how labor should fight union-busting and deal with other problems it faced. In none of these articles was there any mention of the effects of automation in the plants or on the workers. The Militant (8/10/84, p. 18) did mention the practice of outsourcing auto parts (outsourcing is farming out work to nonunion shops or to countries where wages are significantly lower). But that was all. Are the workers truly not interested in this?

In an article in the New York Times (9/14/84) dealing with the impending General Motors strike, Mr. Phipps, a worker at Cadillac's Fleetwood plant who thought he had a lifetime job because he assumed the rich would always be with us, was quoted as follows: "'Buicks, Chevies and others went through layoffs,' he said.... 'We thought that when you built Cadillacs, you'd always have people in power who'll buy them. We thought we'd never have to worry.'

"But now Mr. Phipps is worried ... because, by 1987, General Motors expects to replace two aging Cadillac factories, including the one where he works, and replace more than 8,000 of the 13,000 workers with robots."

"'We've all got kids,' said Mr. Phipps, who has two young sons. 'Where will they work? ... what's left for our young people?'"

Mr. Phipps is not alone in the world. The International Labor Organization estimates that "500 million Third World people are [currently] unemployed or underemployed." (Toronto Star, 8/18/84) In industrial countries 35 million are out of work, and as technology turns over more jobs to machines there is little hope of a reversal. According to John Naisbitt in Megatrends (Warner Books, 1984, p. 75), it takes an average of 31 hours for U.S. workers to build an automobile. In Japan it takes 11 hours, and in a Japanese robot-equipped factory it takes only 9 hours. A quality robot costs \$50,000; it can work two shifts per day for eight years. That figures out to approximately \$1.50 per hour -- with no coffee breaks, no medical insurance, no vacations, and no sick kids. Naisbitt estimates that there will be 60,000 robots in the U.S. auto industry by 1990; that by 1987 75 percent of all jobs in the U.S. will involve computers in some way.

Recently (January 20-22, 1985) the New York Times ran a series of articles on what effect these changes are having on the unions, both in the U.S. and abroad. It is not an optimistic report. Many unions seem hidebound, tied to stereotypical ideas of who the "real" workers are. As an example of such thinking, Times reporter Audrey Freedman cited a meeting she had once attended where "The chairman . . . broke us into two groups: 'The real unions -- steelworkers, boilermakers, and so forth -- go into the room next door. Pantywaist unions -- communications workers, teachers -- stay here.'" (New York Times, 1/20/85)

This analysis of who the "real workers" are sounds remarkably like the attitude of Jack Barnes and the SWP leadership, both in directing their own membership in choice of jobs, and in analyzing where labor action will take place. The SWP resolution, for example, says that had the party not made the turn to industry and industrial unions, "The party's membership and leadership would increasingly have become composed of aging cadres based largely among relatively highly paid white collar workers and public employees." (p. 84) I don't know how turning to industry affects the aging process, but I do know that large union fractions in the teaching and nursing "industries" were decimated as comrades were ordered out of the "pantywaist" unions into the "real" ones. And of course when we talk of white collar workers we are talking about office workers -- who are pre-

dominantly women and, as yet, largely unorganized.

Computers are not just some new commodity on the market, like a radio or TV. While computers are indeed commodities, and computer sales and production are subject to the vicissitudes of the capitalist market, what these machines do transforms our lives. Franco Pedretti, director of marketing for Wang Italia, observes, "Over the last ten years, the productivity of a factory worker has increased by 75 percent, but that of an office worker by 4 percent." (Europeo, 9/29/84) Computers are changing that.

There will be other changes. "Between 1982 and 1995, the Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts that women will account for 64.5 per cent of all new workers.... 'We make projections for some 1,700 occupations,' [said Samuel M. Ehrenhalt, the Federal Bureau of Labor Statistics commissioner for the New York region]. 'Out of the 10 [occupations] that are going to add more workers than any other in the next decade, 8 of those are predominately female occupations.'" (New York Times, 7/31/84)

YALE: IMMENSE SOLIDARITY

While the women's movement is not presently marching in the streets, article after article in the bourgeois press explores and comments upon its continuing social dynamism. Women are challenging society's status quo on all fronts, demanding legal, biological, economic, and social equity. Their attack has revealed them to be innovative, energetic, and in some areas successful. Walls which support the capitalist edifice are cracking. The victory of the office workers at Yale University is a recent and notable accomplishment. But during two months of picketing and struggle this strike received only one mention in the Militant: an editorial supported the strike and the idea of pay equity. (11/30/84)

Following the victory at Yale, the Militant hailed the success of the workers in forming a union and winning wage increases, but coverage has remained low key. While the bourgeois media focused considerable attention on the events in New Haven, no Militant reporters interviewed strikers or reported on Militants being sold at the Yale gates (only 90 miles from New York). There is no statement to compare with the New York Times: "It [the strike] was also highly imaginative. The workers, mostly women, showed immense solidarity, the kind often found today only in labor-history books."

(1/24/85) But then, of course, this image flies in the face of the SWP leadership's analysis of which part of the population is in motion and where they should deploy their forces.

In adapting themselves to the Castroist current, the theorists of the SWP spend much of their time and energy these days discussing agricultural workers as if they are the key to revolutionary activity in all struggles currently taking place in the world. Their emphasis on this question distorts its importance. They make agriculture appear to be at the center of all potential U.S. revolutionary activity. By not involving themselves in any current U.S. working class activity they feel safe in theorizing that the center of world politics is not only elsewhere, but at present is limited to those countries in the Caribbean and Central America where agriculture is the focus of the economy.

But real struggles -- working class struggles -- are taking place in the U.S., and they call for innovative tactics and theoretical assessments. The working class itself is raising new transitional demands such as women's call for wages based on "comparable worth." This demand, which arose publicly less than two years ago, goes beyond the demand for equal pay for equal work. It calls for equal pay for doing jobs of similar difficulty and requiring equivalent skills. Under such guide lines nurses and teachers seek wages on a par with those of truck drivers and steelworkers. Demands such as these call public attention to the whole question and basis of wages, providing an opportunity for Marxists to expose the injustice of the wage system.

Marxists must also address the question of how we are to view the growing automation of manufacturing industries together with the creation of a labor force which is more and more involved in services. These are the jobs which in the past have been considered women's, and which are employing more and more women currently. But this has a double faceted nature, for not only do these jobs provide an income and independence for women, but some services provide a support system. Home appliances have not really emancipated women from house work. Studies show that, in fact, they quite frequently have added to women's work load. The proliferation of fast-food restaurants across the landscape of America may not seem like a socialist's answer to the demand for affordable community kitchens, but such institutions are, without question, a major prop for overburdened mothers.

At the same time that the capitalist class is testing how far they can push independent farmers, they have demonstrated their respect for the women's movement with the nomination of Geraldine Ferraro in the last presidential election. What the Democrats understood and addressed themselves to is something that the SWP has not wanted to examine. The women's movement has made deep inroads into the psyche of male and female alike. Certain changes have been made--and sustained!--over a twenty-year period so that we have an emerging generation of young women who do not believe they are limited to the passenger seat of any vehicle. They believe they have a right to work (with equal pay); and a right to control their own bodies. We see their energy everywhere. And we see the response to women's implicit threat in legislation on issues such as child support and pension redress. It would be a mistake to assume that these laws come from the goodness of the legislators' hearts. Bourgeois candidates do not "initiate" programs for the masses. They only respond. They understand that women's needs are on a collision course with the system. With an economic crisis looming ahead they see the possibility of masses in the streets. They are trying now to coopt women into liberal solutions in order to derail the coming struggle against capitalist injustice.

The SWP has taken to railing against "electoralism." But how do we fight "electoralism" if we are not participating with the masses in their struggles? We cannot limit our activity to selling newspapers, we must help build mass organizations which can become instruments of action. The capitalists' hope for the resolution of impending struggles was expressed in the Toronto Star (8/19/84): "Some experts predict violent revolution if widespread unemployment is not solved in the future....But other experts believe that the opposite is more likely: The longer people are out of work, the more alienated and politically passive they become, and then they are likely to accept authoritarian government."

The crime of all this is that there is political work to be done and there are unquestionably political gains which can be won but the one party which in the past has offered an alternative seems little interested in addressing the issues.

CORRECTION

The article titled, "Women and the SWP: 1979-1984," printed in Bulletin No. 14, contains an error. Based on an article in U.S. News and World Report, I said that women in the U.S. already outnumber males in the workforce. U.S. News had printed a Pictogram captioned "Share in Work Force of All Women Age 16 or Older" and then given women 53.5% of that share. U.S. News has since stated that this is intended to demonstrate that "the share of all women who are in the labor force, not the share of the labor force who are women" is 53.5%.

I am sorry to have reported this information incorrectly, but I don't believe it alters the argument: we do not measure whether or not one is proletarian by percentage points.

Laura Cole

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CONTINUITY AND DISCONTINUITY

As an active supporter of the SWP, I was told by local leaders a few years ago, while you people were still members, that the cause of the internal dissension was your abandonment of the party's traditional policies and practices. You, on the other hand, said it was caused by changes in the party program and norms that were being introduced without discussion by the Barnes leadership.

Now, after two or three years, I think one thing is clear: It is the Barnes leadership that has departed from the SWP's traditional positions, while you are the ones who seem to be holding on to them.

I am not saying it is good or bad. I am not saying the changes made are or are not justified. I am only saying that for whatever reasons, correct or incorrect, you are the ones who have been defending the Trotsky-Cannon traditions of the SWP.

Observer,
New York

LENIN ON DUTIES OF MEMBERS

I am glad to see you reprinting in every issue Lenin's 1920 statement on the duty of party members to study internal party controversies and demand documentation instead of the word of party leaders. I hope SWP members will take it to heart.

Lenin expressed this idea not once, but many times. For example, here is what he wrote in 1913 in an article on "Controversial Issues":

"Every worker who himself wants to examine seriously the controversial questions of the Party, who wants to decide these questions for himself, must first of all assimilate this truth, making an independent study and verification of these Party decisions and of the liquidator arguments. Only those who carefully study, ponder over and reach an independent decision on the problems and the fate of their Party deserve to be called Party members and builders of the workers' party." (Collected Works, vol. 19, p. 159)

An independent reader

WHAT WOULD BARNES HAVE DONE?

When James P. Cannon was a delegate to the Sixth World Congress of the Communist International in 1928, he got hold of a copy of Trotsky's criticism of the Comintern's draft program. He brought it home to the U.S. and showed it to members of the CP who were not "authorized" to see it. For this crime he was expelled from the CP.

In 1982, Jack Barnes and his colleagues voted that Frank Lovell had "forfeited his membership" in the SWP because he had shown a document he had written to "unauthorized" SWP members.

From this we can infer that Barnes and Co. would have voted to expel Cannon if they had been in the leadership of the CP in 1928. If I am wrong in this, I would like to know what they would have done.

H.L.

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